



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

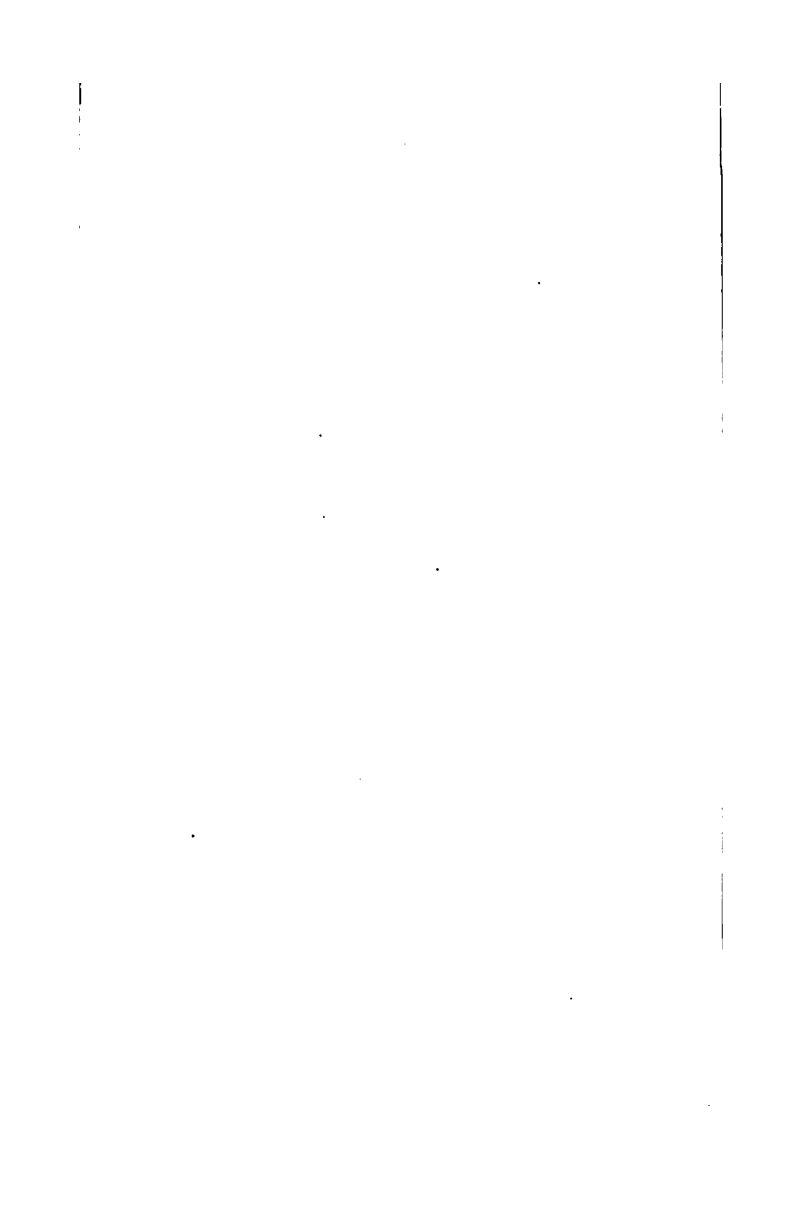


600041641M

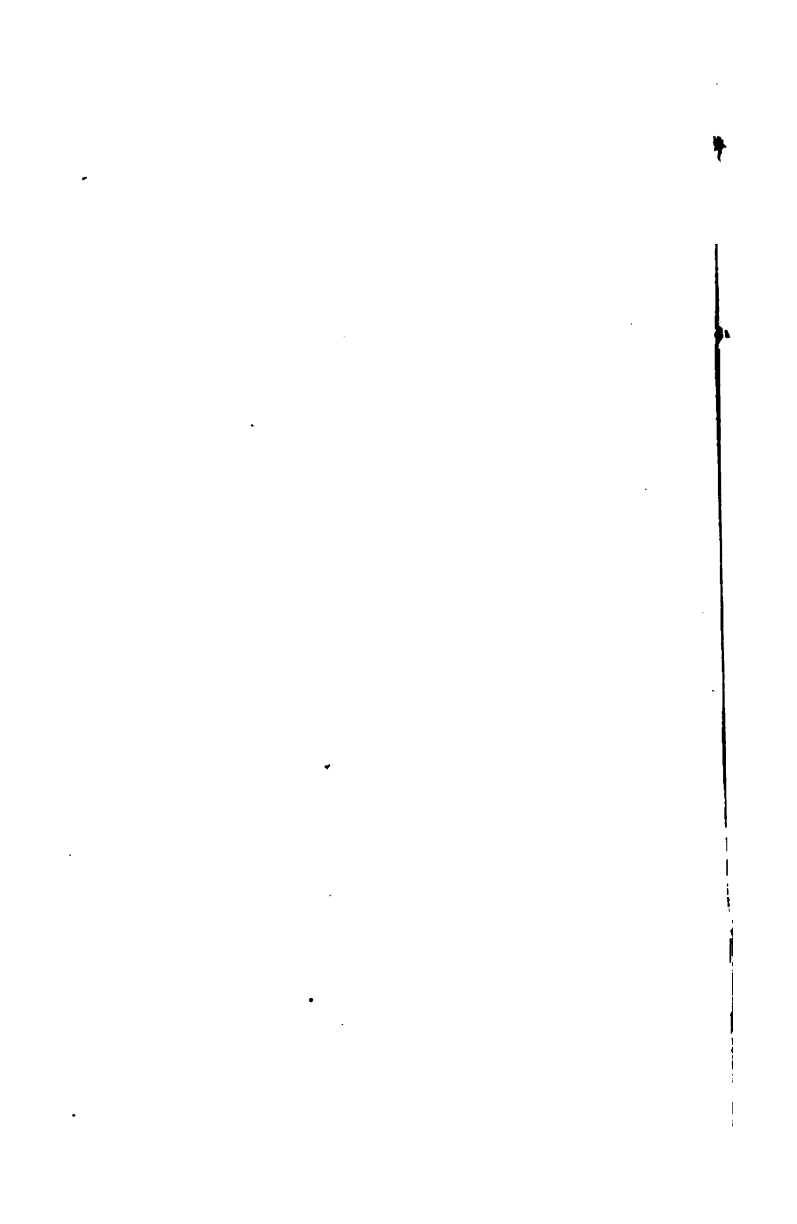
1013

f. 11.





ECCLESIASTES.



ECCLESIASTES;

OR,

LESSONS

FOR

THE CHRISTIAN'S DAILY WALK.

BY

G. W. MYLNE,

AUTHOR OF "INTERCESSORY PRAYER, ITS DUTIES AND
EFFECTS;" "FEAR NOT;" "FAMILY PRAYER," ETC.

Third Edition.

LONDON:

WERTHEIM, MACINTOSH, AND HUNT,

24, PATERNOSTER-BOW,

AND 23, HOLLES-STREET, CAVENDISH-SQUARE.

1859.

LONDON:
WERTHEIM, MACINTOSH, AND HUNT,
24, PATERNOSTER-ROW,
AND 23, HOLLES-STREET, CAVENDISH-SQUARE.

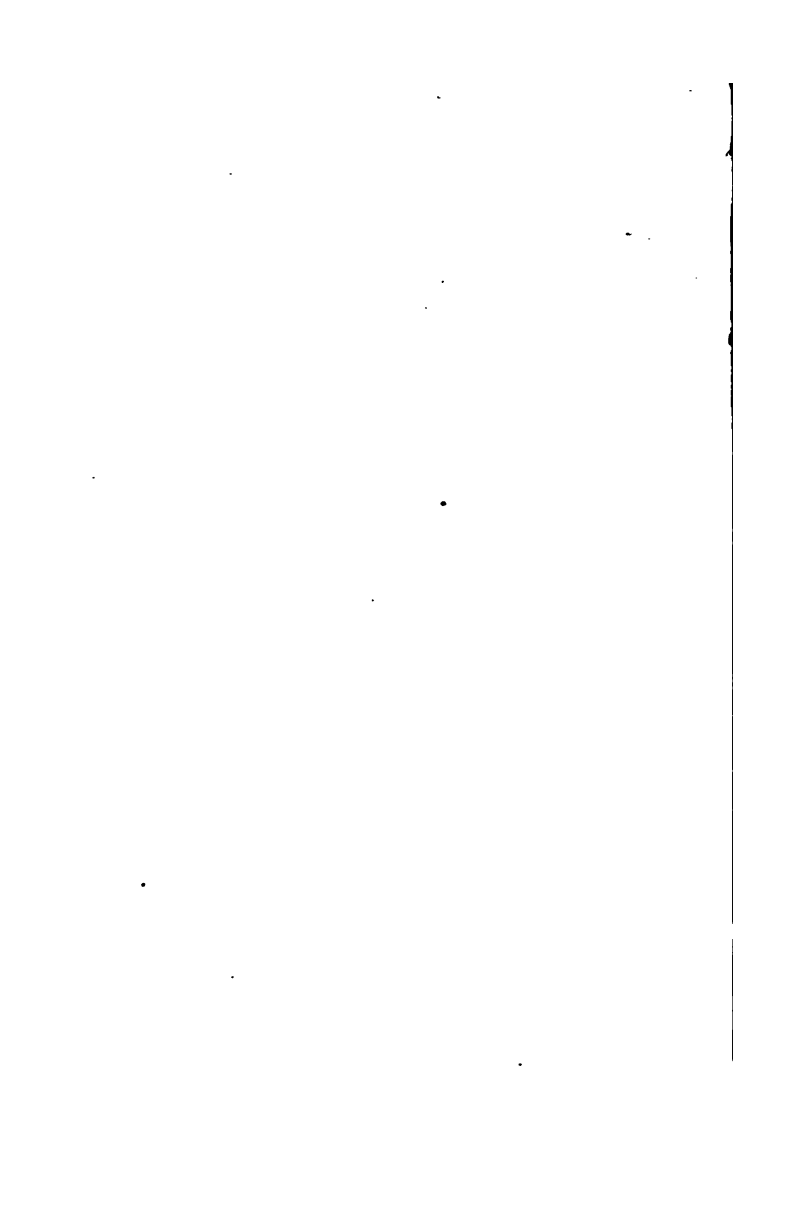


PREFACE.

CUSTOM demands a Preface, yet prefaces are seldom read—more rarely still approved. Often the book explains the preface more than the preface clears the book. 'Twere wiser, then, to put it *last*, that, having read the book, the Reader then might understand the preface! Should books refuse to tell their tale, and thus require another to tell it for them? Reader, you know, I trust, that "Scripture" comes from God. (2 Tim. iii. 16.) One God inspired it all. God spake by Moses; God spake by Solomon;

God spake in Christ; nay, more, *Christ* spake in Moses, and in the Preacher too. One law, one code of morals, is contained in all. The mind of God is one, and always one—not one in Solomon, another mind in Christ. What Moses said, or Solomon has preached, Christ contradicts not, but confirms. That which was duty *then*, is duty *now*. The times have changed—the precept is the same. The law could never justify. 'Twas meant to be, and to continue, the rule of life. The rule was founded on the will of God—His sense of right and wrong. Can this be altered? Can God be changed? What once was right is *always* right. What once was wrong is wrong *for ever*. The Gospel deepens and expands the rule, giving it infinite dimensions of truth, and power. And thus the Preacher's sermons may at once be turned to *Gospel* lessons. For *this* one

thing is needful—that thou *know the Lord*; that all be read, looking to Jesus and His cross. If thus thou honour Christ, the Spirit honours thee; opens the mind to see the mind of God; unfolds the unity of Scripture-truth, blending its every portion into Jesus, Himself the sum and substance of it all. Reader, may Scripture thus be opened, and thus the words of Solomon be blessed to thee and me!



ECCLESIASTES.

“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”—ECCL. I. 2.

MY soul, why seek thy happiness below—here in this fallen world, where “*all is vanity?*” Oft hast thou tried it, anxious still to find some earthly good. As often thou hast found the Preacher right—that “*all is vanity.*” Thou sayest, “All is vanity,”—thou sayest *well*. The worldling, too, can *say* that all is vanity, and yet pursues it still. Be it not so with *thee*! Let all that is empty here lead thee to what alone will satisfy—the grace of God, the love of God, the Lamb of God; to “*Jesus Christ*, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” (Heb. xiii. 8.) Hast thou e’er asked thyself *whence* all this vanity? My soul, it comes from *thee*! Thou, in thy father Adam; thou, in thy fellows of the human race, hast caused it all. Whence comes the tempest? Whence the earthquake; the pestilence; the shipwreck; the blighted crop? Whence sickness, famine, death? Whence come bereavement, bankruptcy, and sorrow? Whence murder, drunkenness, and all uncleanness?

Whence all that is vile, and sad, and disappointing? Whence comes the universal taint—the wrongs, the groans, the misery of all created things? My soul, they come from *thee*; from thee in Adam, and from him in thee. The poison that is in thee, has poisoned all besides. Since *thou* art sinful, all is out of course. Since *thou* art vanity, lo, all things here are vain. The curse that fell on thee thou hast entailed on *them*. My soul, be humbled with the thought—consider and be wise.—Look o'er the Book of Nature. See all the troubles of this fallen world; see all that is disjointed, vile, and fleeting; and say, "It comes from *me*!"—My soul, thou sayest, "*All is vanity!*" Oh, look *within*, for all is vanity *there*. How swift for evil! How dead to all that is good! What rank corruption! What inbred sin! How weak thy purposes! How faltering thy course! If all is vanity *without*, it is tenfold vanity *within*. If all around is vanity, *thou* art the master-vanity of all. Bless, God, then, O my soul—in *Jesus* thou hast that which is not vanity, In *Jesus* thou hast all that is solid, durable, and perfect; food, riches, strength, life, pleasure, comfort, peace. In Him, *what* hast thou *not*? A sure foundation! A Rock that moveth not! Unfailing help! A hope, which maketh not ashamed! Believe, then, of His fulness, and be full indeed.

"*All . . . is vexation of spirit.*"—ECCLES. I. 14.

Who has not felt "*vexation*?" Who knows not what it *means*? The infant in its cradle;

the schoolboy at his play; e'en youth in all its freshness, and manhood in its prime—all, all have felt "*vexation*." My soul, *thou* know'st it well! Thy sins, thy fallen nature, thine infirmities, all lay thee open to "*vexation*." Wonderful art thou in thy sensibilities! How quick to feel! How swift to gather sorrows to thyself through thine *excess* of feeling! Oft hast thou murmured at thy lot, rising in mutiny against thy Maker. How oft has patience failed! What trifles oft have wounded thee! Some scheme of pleasure thwarted; *even* a rainy day; or yet some trifling accident—has often ruffled thy composure. How oft a kind reproof, a friendly warning—some fancied slight—a look—a smile withheld, and yet with no intention of unkindness—has filled thee with *vexation*! How oft has wounded pride; a humbling sense of thine infirmities; a deep conviction of thy want of judgment; the fear of standing low in man's opinion—*vexed* thee beyond expression!—My soul, thou art not singular in thy *vexation*. Go where thou wilt, thou'lt find it. The world is full of it. "*All*," says the Preacher, "*all* is vexation of spirit!" What means the Preacher? Means he that spirits *should* be vexed, and glory in vexation? That woes may *lawfully* be brooded over, or sense of injuries be *cherished* in the soul? That morbid feelings be indulged in? That moody silence, brooding vexation, and carking care, are healthful for the soul? Oh, no! If God be true; if precept have its weight, and promises their meaning—"vexation," O my soul, should have no part in *thee*! Open thou *must* be

to its trials day by day. But *where* is thy grace; thine active holiness; thy consistency; *where* is thy strength, thy comfort, and thy steadfastness, if thou art conquered by *vexation*? Hast thou, then, learned of Christ, the lowly and the meek, and *not found rest*, my soul! (Matt. xi. 29.) Thou hast learned thy lesson badly. Go, learn it o'er again. Fight, then, against this habit of *vexation*. Give it no place within thee. Look to the COMFORTER to help thee. Hide thee in JESUS. Taste the tranquillity of God. Take every trial, as it rises, to thy Saviour-Friend. Then *peace* shall be thy portion—not *vexation*. Though faint, *yet* be *pursuing*, and thou shalt gain the victory still. (Judges viii. 4.)

“*All things are full of labour.*”—ECC. I. 8.

READER, how many things remind thee what thou art—a fallen creature! Not least of these, the *toil* and trouble of this changing world. The sun and moon, and planets in their course—the restless wind—the ever-flowing, never-tarrying river—are pictures of the ceaseless *toil* of man. (ver. 4—7.) The hum of cities; the labour of the field; the crowded factory; the cottage loom; the bread you eat; the clothes you wear; the house you live in; the fire on your hearth—all speak of *labour*. How could you have them without *labour*, either your own, or others'? The ploughman and mechanic earn their bread with daily toil. But there are *other* modes of labour—labour in thought, and speech, and action,—not the less trying to the human frame.

My soul, envy not those who eat the bread of idleness. God, in His love, has made the curse a blessing; and thus the greater toil, the greater honour; the more the duties done, the more respect is due, if God is feared, and honoured in them all. Look at the household servant—how numerous her calls! Duties to God—to master, mistress, kinsfolk, self, and friends; no time to call her own; hastily summoned from her work, her meals, or her devotions. She takes her food—for *what?* to give her strength to *labour* yet *again!* The toil of day is done; she lays her down—to rise and *labour* on the *morrow!* How much to try the temper, wear the body, vex the mind! Yet, if she keep her soul in patience, and look to *Jesus*, not for salvation only, but for strength, for meekness, and a willing mind,—if thus she go the round of daily duties, no station is more dignified than *hers*.

Reader, whoe'er thou art—whate'er thy calling—the greatest earthly blessing I can wish thee is to have *much to do*, and *health to do it*. May all thy work be sanctified by prayer! In all thy *labour* remember *Jesus!* He, in a *servant's* form, once laboured here. Say, art thou *wearied?* *He* was weary too. (John iv. 6.) Tell Him thine every toil, and this shall comfort thee. Lean on His bosom. In his abiding presence seek thy rest. But if thou know not *Jesus*, what comfort hast thou in thy *labour!*—what comfort in *repose?* Have faith in *Jesus*. Weary of sin, seek rest from sin in *Jesus*. Does an evil conscience trouble thee? Seek rest from *this* in

Jesus. Then shall the Spirit testify of Jesus, and all thy toil be rest.

“The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing.”—ECCLES. 1. 8.

THE *senses* are but *servants* to the *soul*. The soul desires to look, and sets the eye to *see*. The soul would hear, and sets the ear to *hearken*. The soul is *never* wearied. It listens to sweet music, after the ear is tired—and lingers, longing still for more. *When* had the soul enough of a sweet flower? *When* was it ever filled to overflowing with the soft undulations of the landscape? Nothing on earth can satisfy the *soul*. It quits its pleasures with a craving; sighs to renounce its satisfactions; and grieves to think how limited, how *passing* limited, are all its joys. Oh, there is a longing in the soul; a restless appetite to see and hear, to grasp, to understand; an energy for action; a stretching forth of thought; a yearning principle, that spurns the trammels of the senses. And *yet* (such is the tribute due to fallen nature) *sense*, in its feebleness, keeps down the *soul*—the soul, with all its energy, cannot overpower *sense*. How sad, how humbling the condition of fallen man!—Yet, Child of God, *thou* hast no cause to mourn. Gifted by grace with higher faculties, thou hast wherewith to feed them to the full. By faith thou seest, hearest, tastest, better things. Thou seest *Jesus* on the throne of God. Thou seest the “sea of glass,” and hearest

"the voice of harpers harping with their harps." (Rev. xiv. 2.) My soul, why linger after *sense*, and things of time, when better sights, and better sounds invite thee? Or why lament thy straitened means, with heavenly powers so unlimited? Then let thine eye repose on *Jesus*. The more you look at *Him*, the longer will you look. The more you look, the more will be your *power* to gaze upon Him. The more you commune with Him, the sweeter shall you find His company. Speak much to *Jesus*—thou shalt not speak in vain. The name of Jesus shall be to thee "as beds of spices, and sweet flowers." (Cant. v. 13.) The whispers of the Spirit, telling of grace and peace, shall ever and anon refresh thine ear.—My soul, these pleasures *never* fail thee. Not like the music, that *was*, and is not—no hand to sweep the chords, though ears there be to listen! Not like a feast of yesterday—gone by! Not like the flowers that once were sweet, and now are sweet no longer! Not like the landscape thou hast left behind! Thy Saviour, Friend, and Comforter, is *ever* with thee—now and to all eternity the *same*?

"*There is no new thing under the sun.*"—
ECCLES. I. 9.

"Is there *anything*, whereof it may be said, See, this is *new*?" (Ver. 10.) So spake the Preacher. But "Stop," you say—"Solomon ne'er saw the *railway's* iron road. The *electric telegraph* was then unknown. No brilliant *gas* converted night to day. And no *balloon* yet floated in the

air." My friend, was Solomon, then, *wrong*? Can we prove his saying false? Are things, then, changed since Solomon? Can we say, "*This is new*?" Ah, wisdom more than Solomon's inspired the sacred Word; and One who, from the first, knew all things that should happen *to the end of time*, still said, "The thing *that hath been*, it is that *which shall be*; and that which is done is that which shall be done." (Ver. 9.) What means the Preacher, then? My friend, *man* is unchanged from Solomon—yes, even from Adam—until now; his nature, feelings, appetites; his sins, corruptions, and infirmities—the same as ever. The *Railway* carries the same freight of selfish man, as travelled formerly in other ways. The *Telegraph* conveys the messages of the same passions, enterprise, and avarice, that swayed our forefathers. The *Gas* lights up the same abodes of sin. The aeronaut, from his *Balloon*, looks down on man the very counterpart of all he was before. Then, is there *nothing* new since Adam? My soul, is nothing new to *thee*? Yes! *grace* is *new*. Nor man, nor angels knew it at the first. And *thou*, my soul, knewest nothing of it, till God Himself enlightened thee. No rite of man—no power of education, nor yet of moral character—could give it; nought but the SPIRIT of the living God.

My soul, if CHRIST is thine, and thou art CHRIST's, to thee *all* things are *new* indeed—new heart, new mind, new birth; new tastes, new faculties, new powers; new hopes, new fears; new prospects, new desires; new company to keep—new friends to love—new brethren to

cherish; yes, a new world to view, a new kingdom to inherit—all things in *grace* NEW, as unknown before; *all* things in *nature* NEW, since thou hast seen them in another light. *New* things thou findest in each *promise*, and in each *precept* of the Word; thy God, thy Saviour, and thy Comforter, the *newest*, still, of all. By prayer, by watchfulness, by meditation, stir up the heavenly gift; excite the new-born taste; and still, at every turn, find *all* things *new*. O ye that lack variety, why seek it *here*? Come ye, O come to JESUS, and *then* find all things *new* indeed.

"That which is crooked cannot be made straight."

—ECCL. I. 15.

Do what you may, *crosses* are crosses *still*. No art of man's device can make the crooked straight. The "train," or ship, that bears some friend away; the quiet sea, after a night of shipwreck; the rain that robs you of a holiday; the broken pieces of some favourite vase; *all* say the same, "The crooked must be *crooked*, do what you will."—Oh, there is anguish in the thought, that *nothing* can be done, as disappointment, stealing o'er the mind, throws its dark shadows on the brow! The soul then muses on its sorrow, and thinks again, "No! remedy there is *none*. Truly this is a *grief*; and I must *bear* it." (Jer. x. 19.) *Philosophy* is useless then. Stern patience brings no real comfort with it. A smiling face may hide a broken heart; and lips will speak of resignation, when the worm of

blasted hopes is preying on the soul. *Where*, then, is *comfort* to be found? *What*, then, will make the bitter sweet, the crooked straight? Not the mere fact of looking at the Word; nor yet in *owning* that your trials come from God. (Eccl. vii. 18.) *Cain* owned as much as this, yet *Cain* was wretched still. (Gen. iv. 13, 14.) And, Reader, *you* will be wretched in your trials, if you can do no more. Nought but the *Cross of Christ* makes other crosses straight. Do you know *Jesus Christ*? By *name* you know Him, doubtless; but is He in your *heart*? Say, are your sins forgiven? Are you at peace with God? Does the *Holy Spirit* dwell in you? Does *He* instruct your soul? If not, *then* must your cross be crooked *still*. From my heart I pity thee, my Friend! Bitter to thee must *still* be bitter, with nought to sweeten it. Full many a blast shall blow upon thee—where then thy shelter? But, oh, thy *soul*! thy precious soul! *What* will it be? *Where* will it be hereafter!

But, Child of God, *thou* knowest what it is to have thy crosses *straightened*. Oft hast thou brought them to the cross of Christ, and even rejoiced to have a cross to bear. All things are precious, that bring thee to the Cross. Tried by this rule, thy bitter things are sweet, thy crooked things are straight. Art thou offended at the cross? Oh, look again! Seest thou not *Jesus* there? Can He not make it straight? Where, then, thy *patience*? My friend, where, then, thy *faith*?

"That which is wanting cannot be numbered."—
ECCOL. I. 15.

How *simple* is the truth here spoken, yet how *deep*! Of wounded hearts, of withered hopes it speaks: of losses, trials, sorrows; some lighter, some more serious; yet in them *all* the truth is still the same. Your favourite flower droops and dies; some keepsake gift is lost; some cherished member of the family *was*, and is not. How oft it rends the heart—it *always* costs a pang—to count one's treasures over, and to find one "*wanting*!" Objects may still be found to fill the vacant place. But ah! the missing one is *gone*, not to return again, and leaves the heart to mourn its absence. But there is a blessed secret (*to those who know it*) to fill such empty spaces with more than they have lost, and add ten thousand fold to their diminished store. Reader, whatever you have lost, place Jesus in its room. Fill every blank with Jesus, and it shall be a blank *no more*. Have you lost a Friend? Does memory cling to the spot he occupied? You look, and look again: *he is not there*. No opening door brings back his well known form. Once you could number him among your treasures, but *now* you number him no more. Haste thee to fill the blank with that which cannot fail thee; strain not thy sight to gaze on emptiness, nor fill the mind with shadows of the past. Oh, fix your thoughts on Jesus! Think of Him, as your best, your dearest Friend. Think of His grace, His love.

No living friend—no friend that is departed—could love thee, think of thee, or watch thee, as JESUS aye has done. Though other friends be gone, yet you can “number” Him. Though earthly goods be lost, yet JESUS still is there. No blank can be a blank, when JESUS fills the void. Your losses are but gains, when they bring JESUS to your soul. See *every* blank through JESUS. All that you *should* forget, His form shall hide. All that you *may* remember, you still shall see in *Him*. Memory shall thus be chastened, and God Himself shall soften every woe. But, Reader, say, *who art thou?* Is JESUS such to *thee*, that the void places in thy heart can *thus* be filled? Oh, if thou knowest Him not,—if He is not thy best, thy bosom Friend, it is vain to speak to *thee* as I have done. But I would ask thee to think this matter over. Ere other friends are taken, or other treasures gone; ere life itself is ebbing, and *thou* art no more *numbered* here, oh! seek and find the treasure that never can be lost.

In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.”—
ECC. I. 18.

What kind of wisdom causeth *grief*? What kind of knowledge is it, that *increaseth sorrow*? Perhaps it means the knowledge of the *world*, its vileness, folly, and uncertainty—to have learned that all its show is vain, and all its pleasure nought. *This* causes *grief* to them, who see its vanity. God's people mourn it. And

worldlings oftentimes disgusted with themselves and all around, and having nought to sanctify the feeling, are filled with bitter disappointment.—Also to know one's own corruption, to catch a glimpse of self in all its frailty; to see our sin, to taste its power—to dread the pains, and not to know the remedy—*this* causes *grief*. Sorrow like *this* is turned to joy, when sinners look to *Jesus*. Yet many saints forget the promises, and fill their souls with bitterness, from want of faith.—Again, wisdom may mean the *Science of the Schools*—the round of human learning, and attainment in the arts. *Here* also *grief* is to be found. There is many a slip—many vexations—in searching after knowledge. The mind is hampered by its limited capacity; and, having gone thus far, it sighs that it can go no farther. How many a bright experiment thus ends in grief; and man discovers, to his cost, that wisdom, after all, is vanity!—But, most of all, wisdom like *this* occasions *grief*, in that it tempts the soul to rest in *second causes*, and thus to slight the Lord. 'Tis true, there is exquisite delight in following some cherished study; to trace the hidden things of art and science—to bring to light some fact, or principle, unknown before. But *then* the *world* to *come*! Art thou *prepared* for it? What of thy *sins*? Are they *forgiven*? What will declining age, what will thy death-bed be? What is to be the *end* of all thy labour? If all thy wisdom end in misery—if all thy knowledge but pervert thy soul, is it not *sorrow*, after all?—Reader, wouldst thou be *saved*? Then learn

thy wisdom in another school—the school of *Christ*. There thou wilt learn to know *thyself*. This is no trifling part of wisdom. And, better still, there wilt thou learn to know the *Saviour*—God, in *Christ Jesus*, forgiving sin, changing the heart, and bringing thee to glory. *This* wisdom grieves not; *this* knowledge adds no sorrow. Taste it, my friend—be happy and be wise.

“I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?”—ECCLES. II. 2.

OF natural gifts none is more rare than *cheerfulness*; that elasticity of mind, and buoyancy of spirit; that even temper, and sunshine disposition—which cheers the man himself, and all who know him. Cheerfulness, gilded with grace, and sanctified, savours most largely of the mind of Christ; it speaks of peace with God; of resignation to His will, and freedom from sordid appetites and cares. *Who* would reprove the beaming smile, or, in due season, the hearty laugh? In youth, especially, it is pleasant to behold it—it were a mistaken thought to wish it gone. The cares of life will throw their shadows soon enough across the mind, and we may wish again to see some of that elasticity we were wont to chide.—But *this* is not the “*laughter*,” nor the “*mirth*,” that *Solomon* means. He meant the *idle* laughter, the *systematic* mirth; merriment followed as an object; the love of pleasure, as the grand pursuit of life. “*Laughter*,” like *this*, is “as the crackling of thorns under a pot.” (Eccl. vii. 6.) Empty in

sound, it tells of emptiness *within*, and savours of a mind unused to sober thought, and healthy action.—*Who* should be cheerful as the child of God—as he, who has nought to fear, whether on earth, or in the world to come? But, oh, my soul, let not thy cheerfulness assume an air of levity. Laughter is good in moderation, and the cheerful interchange of mirthful thought is oft refreshing to a jaded mind. But, oh, beware how thou indulge it to excess, or slide unwittingly into the habit of unguarded mirth. *Such* mirth as *this* must tell most hurtfully upon thee. It will mar the spirit of prayer, unfit the mind for meditation, and eat away the taste for heavenly things.—It is pleasing to a man to move his friends to laughter. The play on words, the studied joke, the repartee; the art of mimicking your neighbour—his tones, his gait, his actions; to see a company hanging on your words for merriment—all this is captivating. But, child of God, beware! This will not keep thee at the feet of Jesus. Human applause is dangerous, and much to be eschewed. When tempted, therefore, to exceed in mirth, and lose thyself amid its fascinations, fall back upon thy soberness; remember Jesus, and the SPIRIT; think of thy past experience, and forbear.

“*The wise man’s eyes are in his head.*”—

ECCL. II. 14.

THE worldling has no spiritual sight; his eyes are *gone*. Thus blind he will remain, except

the Lord should give him sight. He sees neither his lost condition, nor its remedy. To *him*, sin is not sin—God is not God—Christ is not Christ—heaven is not heaven—hell is not hell—*because he walks in darkness*. My soul, be it not thus with *thee* ! If God has given thee sight, art thou not bound to use it to His glory ? Then, let thine eyes be *in thy head*—*not*, like the fool's, "*in the ends of the earth*." (Prov. xvii. 24.) Thou hast an eye—if rightly used—quick to discern the Tempter's snare, however well concealed. If thou hast fallen into sin, *whose* fault is it ? Why hast thou eyes to see with, *if thou use them not* ? Say not, "*I did not see it*—the Tempter was too subtle for me." This is to throw discredit on the gift of God. Thou shouldst have been more careful—*then* this grief had not been thine.—Beware of *dreaming*, as you walk along, gazing on empty nothings—on meditations of your own device. In doing so, plain duties will be overlooked. Oh, my soul, look well around thee—see what thy duties are. Look at them in the face. Turn not away, because they are homely, or because thine eye is fixed on something more inviting. Thy wisdom is to keep thine eyes at home. *Home duties*, and *home temptations*, demand thine earliest care. Keep these, then, in the foreground of thy vision—*then* mayest thou safely look at what is beyond.—If thou art given to abstract thought, and spend much time in *study*, oh ! take care. None should observe their steps, like *star-gazers* ! Some sudden call to active duties, some trifling interruption—something, that tries your patience—

may prove a stumbling-block, over which thou hadst not tripped, if thine eyes had only done their duty.—And thou, my soul, keep thou thine eyes from wandering in forbidden paths. When in the haunts of vanity, oh ! keep thine eyes *at home* ; hide them within the lids of watchfulness. Beware of looking *everywhere*, not knowing *what* to look for ! This leads to vanity. The showy magazine ! The gay attire ! *Walking temptations*, mighty to allure ! My soul, thou knowest them well. Make, then, a *covenant with thine eyes* (Job xxxi. 1) ; call in thy wandering energies ; restrain the prying vision of thine appetites ; think of the grace of *Jesus*, and fix thine eyes on *Him*.

“*Therefore I hated life.*”—Eccl. ii. 17.

So thought the prophet *Jonah*. So thought *Job* and *Elijah*, *Moses* and *Jeremiah*. (Jon. iv. 3 ; Job vi. 9 ; 1 Kings xix. 4 ; Num. xi. 15 ; Jer. xx. 14.) But were they right—these men of old—to rise in mutiny against their lives, and God’s corrective dealings ? Not so the great Apostle. With all their sufferings, none had such cause to feel life burdensome, as *he*. If ever man were justified in hating life, it were *Saul* of Tarsus. Yet, with all this, and strong “desire to depart and be with Christ,” he hated not his life. “To me,” he said, “*to live is CHRIST* ;” although he felt that it were *gain to die*. (Phil. i. 21, 23.) To hate his life would be to hate the thoughts, the presence, and the smile of *JESUS*. To *him* these treasures were

intertwined with life itself. He could not breathe, but CHRIST breathed in him; he could not journey, but CHRIST went with him; he could not suffer, but JESUS suffered in him. In bonds, imprisonment, and stripes; in watchings, weariness, and fastings; in perils by land, and perils on the deep; in these, and such like visitations, *what* was his life? 'Twas CHRIST. CHRIST in his thoughts; CHRIST in his heart; CHRIST ever present to his soul. Long as life lasted, it was the gift of God—the vehicle, for the time, of Paul's existence—that living state, on which was grafted, by the Spirit, the life of JESUS. How could he, then, hate life, except he hated the thought of JESUS!—Reader, this is a lesson to *thee*, and *me*. Be it our aim to be with JESUS; to have done for ever with our sin and shame, and earnestly to long for glory; but never to hate the life, which God has given to be a blessing.—Reader, before the worlds were made, the time of death, both yours and mine, was settled, to a moment, in God's eternal will; and when the moment comes, nought shall detain us here. Till *then* God has a purpose in our length of days; something or other to be done, or suffered—which purpose it is our glory to fulfil. When God says, "Live," then it is good to *live*; when He says, "Friend, come up to Me," then it is good to *die*. Then, Christian, whether in sickness, want, or pain; in care, uncertainty, or sorrow—to *thee* to live is CHRIST. Thy life is precious, to the last breath and throb, because God gives it; and because, in every throb and breath, CHRIST lives in thee. Hate not thy life;

despise it not; but ever honour it for JESUS' sake; and live that life *by faith of Him*, who gave himself for *thee*. (Gal. ii. 20.)

"There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink."—ECCL. II. 24.

HAD Solomon's wisdom left him? Did he mean to say that, after all, the drunkard, or the epicure is the happiest man? Oh! no. The Preacher's object was to ascertain which, of all earthly goods, involved the smallest disappointment. The man of sensual pleasures looks not beyond the moment. Present enjoyment is his sole pursuit. He eats, and drinks, and, for the time, is satisfied. No distant calculations fill his mind; no stretching into things unknown; no measuring of causes and effects; no vast comparison of past and present science; no thought that carries him beyond the arts of generations yet to come, and, in its yearnings after knowledge, sighs that it cannot live for ever, in the fond pursuit,—Oh! what a thought it is! What a result of fallen nature! Apart from grace, the more a man is raised above the brutes—the more he rises in refinement, and in lofty enterprise—the more he is doomed to *disappointment* in the end. The world may profit by his labours and applaud his lore; but what will this avail him *after he is gone*?—Judged only with regard to earthly happiness, mental pursuits excel the love of pleasure, as darkness is excelled by light. But—weighed against eternity—sensual pleasure, and earthly wisdom are merely on a par. Each fails alike to

taste for heaven ; to bring the sinner to the Cross of Christ ; to take the sting from death ; or to regenerate the soul.—Christian, *beware !* We live in dangerous times, when human art, and intellect are worshipped by too many. Some, even of God's people, are led away, and think that cultivation of the taste, and mind, will fit them better for the joys of heaven. Others, by mental culture, would teach the ignorant to love the truth. Alas ! that men of God should so forget themselves ! They do not consider that even in its highest flights (compared with heavenly truth), *philosophy* is, after all, a *carnal* thing. The things of earth are earthy ; spiritual things are Spirit. You cannot mix the two ; therefore confound them not. The one will never help the other ; then try it not. Nought but "*Christ crucified*" will *civilize* the soul. Nought else deserves the name. Be satisfied with nothing short of this. The mind, the taste, the intellect of man, are as much fallen as the body. Nought, that directs itself to these, can cure his malady. CHRIST, even from first to last ; God's HOLY SPIRIT manifesting Christ ; the drawings of the ALMIGHTY FATHER's love—these, and these only, humanize the soul, lift it from earth, and nurture it for heaven.

-
-
- " *A time to kill a time to weep a time to lose He hath made everything beautiful in his time.*"—ECCLES. III. 1—11.

" To *everything* there is a *season*, and a *time* to

every purpose under heaven." There is a time when God ordains each varying circumstance to happen. Some things proceed directly from his hand. In others, *man* is the agent; his love or hatred, skill or power, working mysteriously the will of God. Thus human purposes are over-ruled, and the worst passions of the heart are turned to good account. Thus "wicked hands" fulfilled the "counsel" of Jehovah in nailing to the cross the Lord of glory. (Acts ii. 23.) The "*time to kill*" was "*beautiful*." It sealed the covenant with blood—the blood of Jesus.—The "*time to hate*" was "*beautiful*," when Shimei cursed David. (2 Sam. xvi. 10.) The sin was Shimei's, the benefit was David's—the benefit, the *beauty* of sanctified affliction; the grace of resignation to the will of God.—The "*time to lose*" was "*beautiful*," when Job was stripped of all that he possessed. The patriarch *confessed* it beautiful, and blessed God's holy name. (Job ii.)—"Beautiful," with the Shunamite, the "*time to weep*." Her only child was taken: yet she said, "*It is well*." (2 Kings iv. 26.) And yet no dint of human patience, or of moral fortitude, gives beauty to affliction, or makes us recognise God's righteous hand. When you are told of shipwreck, famine, pestilence, or battle; of families left fatherless; of widowed mothers reft of an only child; wealth in a moment turned to poverty; of loss in trade, or sudden fire; when blood runs cold with what you see or hear; when sympathy is on the rack, and bitterness pervades the soul; or when some act of Providence befalls yourself,

and lays you low—*then* can you say, “It’s ‘*beautiful!*’ It is the Lord. It must be good; Himself has done it?” (Isa. xxxviii. 15.) Ah, *this* requires a spirit taught of God, a mind renewed by grace; a heart at peace with God; to have brought your sins to Jesus; and, in the school of Christ, to have learned to look at all things with the mind of God. Such wisdom comes from heaven. It is not stoical. It hardens not the heart, nor deadens it to tender sympathy. It is not a dogged resignation, nor cold indifference. It is faith prevailing over flesh; hope smiling in its tears; patience enduring to the end, and calmly triumphing o’er unbelief.

“*Also, He hath set the world in their heart.*”—
ECCL. III. 11.

What means this verse? What *world*, what *heart* is meant? Truly the world is in the heart of man—the world in all its vanity and sin. But was it *God* who set it there? The work was *Satan’s*. *He* set it there, and man, with suicidal hands, finished what he began. *This* cannot be the *world* the Preacher means. Then say, *what* mean the words? Compare them with the context. You will see that God has *set the world*—the world of all that happens here—in the “*heart*,” or midst, of all the *times and seasons*, which the Preacher names. Survey his

list of joys and sorrows, of purpose and event. (Vers. 2—8.) Is not “the *world*”—your world and mine, the world of all our history—*set* in the “*heart*” of all the seasons, numbered there? The *Sailor’s* “world;” his voyaging to and fro, his storms and calms, his shipwrecks, and his prosperous adventures; the whole is set in the *heart* of changing winds—east, west, and north, and south encircling him with breezes foul or fair.—The *Farmer’s* world, again, is “set” in the “*heart*” of varying seasons—sunshine and shadow, snow and rain, and frost and thaw, working with seeming opposition, yet with secret sympathy, the purposes of God, and good of man. *What* more uncertain than the wind? *What* less to be relied on than the weather? So is it with the things of life—sickness and health, prosperity and woe—giving each other place in quick succession. Life for a year, a month, a day, an hour—life for a moment! *What* is it, Reader? *What has* it been? *What will* it be to *thee*? It is as it has *been*; it *will* be as now it *is*—in length uncertain, and diverse in its hue. It is *so* uncertain, *none* can “find out the work that God worketh from the beginning to the end.”—(Ver. 11.) And, Child of God, is it not so with *thee*? The frost and thaw—the sun and rain—the calm, the storm, are not more needful to the soil, than varying experience to *thee*—to nourish grace, nip evil in the bud, to exercise and fructify the soul. Bless God for changes and uncertainties, whether in spiritual frames or outward things. Seek not to have thy “*world*” torn

from the "*heart*" of varying dispensations, but look to God, in Christ, to *overrule* them all.

"And that they might see that they themselves are beasts."—ECCLES. III. 18.

It is well to be reminded of our origin; to see that of the same materials were made both man and beast. He, that made one, made both; from the *same* lump He made them. (Gen. ii. 7—19.) Reader, even *now* say to the *dust*, "Thou art my father," and to the *worm*, "My mother and my sister!" (Job xvii. 14.) Nay, take the *potsherd* on the dunghill—the veriest fragment of the meanest vase—and in it greet thy kindred dust. If brother to the worm, a "near connexion" art thou to the potter's vessel.—*Who* made thee differ from other forms of clay? Not thou thyself, but *God*.—God's image was in man at first—likeness in soul, imparting to the outward man a godlike form; the moral life, thus given, lighting humanity with godlike qualities. Man's nature was suffused with glory not its own. It was lent—to be recalled at will—not permanently given. When sin came in, God's image fled, and man became a fallen creature.—Reader, compare thyself with other animals. Say, *which* is better off, thyself, or they? They're *dust*, and so art *thou*; they're *mortal*, art not thou the *same*? The beasts have nothing godlike; by nature, what hast *thou*? Nought that is godly—nothing but what is fallen and corrupt. Thou art like the fallen

Angels—that is all. In *death* hast thou “pre-eminence” over the *beasts*? They die, and so they end. If bliss they have not in the world to come, at least they have no misery. If the spirit of the beast go “downward to the *earth*” (ver. 21), does *thine* go down to *hell*? Will it indeed go “*upward*?” Far better be a beast, and perish thus, than live eternally in misery.—And thou, my soul, in thy new nature, what hast *thou*? Nothing but what thou hast “*received*.” (1 Cor. iv. 7.) It was not *thine*; God *gave* it thee. But for His grace, more brutish than the beasts wouldst thou have been. *This* was thy nature; such is thy nature *still*. God only maketh thee to differ. Blinder than Bartimeus—more dead than Lazarus—*where* hast thou light and life? Only in *Jesus*! Only in the *Comforter*! See, then, thy nothingness. Fear not to take it to thyself. *Thine* is the sin; the righteousness is God’s. *Thine* the corruption; His the glory. Grace gives thee nothing of *thine* own. It clothes thee, crowns thee, fills thee, with *Jesus*. Then be content. In self-esteem be nought; be everything in Jesus.

“*All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.*”

—ECCLES. III. 20.

WHAT a mysterious thing is *life*! The moving, feeling, breathing, thinking! *Wherein* consists the principle of *being*? Who can define it, fathom, or analyze it? The powers, the tastes, perceptions, of the mind, *what* are they? The art of pencilling the works of nature—taking the

form, the tints, the softness of the landscape, and tracing it on *canvas*; the faculty of drawing from the soul the combination of sweet sounds, and thus devising *melody*; the power of searching and pursuing *science*—Reader, *what is it?* Say in *what* corner of the mind it grows. *What* chamber of the brain does it inhabit? That immaterial thing—the *mind*; acting, and acted on by matter, floating upon life's surface so mysteriously—*what is it?* Oh my soul, *what is it*—*what art thou?*—And, *then*, the instinct of the brutes—the horse, the ass, the dog, the elephant! Those wondrous faculties! Intelligence, almost akin to human! *What is it?* *Where* was it, ere it came? *Where* is it, when it's gone? It was, and *is not*!—Of wonders known and physical, *life* surely is the greatest. But *still* it is a greater mystery that life should be, and *cease* to be—that life be turned to *death*, soundness to rottenness, and rottenness to dust! That man and beast should mingle dust and dust, and none be able to discover which is *which*!

My soul, this leads thee to conclusions, facts, and feelings, overwhelming to thy powers. It bids thee shelter thee beneath thine immortality; “mortality” that is “swallowed up of life”—mortality exchanged for incorruption. For a season thou hast lived, and livest still, within an earthy frame; thine energies called forth, thy feelings exercised, by earthly things. *Hence* thy phenomena of heart and mind; hence all the phases of thy being; hence all the mysteries, of which we speak. Thus flesh and spirit dwell together for a time. As age ad-

vances, the soul draws in its feelers. Its faculties shrink back within itself; its powers thus fade, and fade away—till, lo! the curtain drops in death, and all is veiled! Then earth returns to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Man, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things are then alike again. *Who* then shall say, "This the philosopher's, and this the hound's! This was fair woman's form, and this the worm's!" Reader, and *thou* wilt dwell in dust, except the Lord should come again in our day. In dust wilt thou abide, till resurrection sounds shall greet thine ear. When the earth casts out the dead, say, *where* shalt thou appear?

"*But they had no comforter.*"—ECCL. IV. 1.

POOR sufferers! And was there none to comfort them? Not one of all their brothers of the human race! Were they not *brothers*? Sprung from one father; by the same God created; bound by the tie of blood! O *Sin*, what havoc thou hast made of all that is brotherly! But for *thee*, no grades there were of feeling and affection, cooling apace from warmth to coldness, till the name of *brother* dies on the earliest confines of relationship.—"*They had no comforter!*" Such are there still. *Some* have no comforter, because they are friendless. *Some*, because none can understand their sorrows. *Others*, because no human sympathy can reach their woes. *Others*, again, because they are wild with sorrow. As far as comfort goes, they have nought

between them and suicide, madness, or a broken heart.—Reader, have *you* no comforter? Are *you* too poor, too humble, too retiring, too little like the world—that men should care for you? Or are your trials, conflicts, and temptations, what few can understand? Are you thus *solitary* in your sensibility? Are you tempted to despair?—Ah, my friend, is there, indeed, *no comforter*? None to pity! What! none to love! And none to comfort thee! Where then is *Jesus*? Do you not know Him? Where is God's Holy Spirit? Does He not dwell with you, abide in you? If not, no wonder you have “no comforter.”—“Miserable comforters” are all earthly things. They play upon the surface; they cannot reach the heart. They cannot take the poison from affliction, or draw the arrow from the wounded soul. Such comfort you must seek where only it is found—with *Jesus*! He came expressly as a Comforter. When upon earth, He comforted his friends; and when He left them, *whom* did He say He would send? Another *Comforter*! (John xiv. 16.)—Oh, my friend, *what* comfort do you need? Comfort for *sense of sin*? Comfort for *sharp temptation*?—for *warring conflict*?—for *darkness* in the soul? Is it for *sickness, poverty, or sorrow*? For *loss of friends*? For *loss of character*? Oh! if you love the Lord, say not, “I have no comforter!” The Lord is thy comforter!—“No comforter!” Is there no comfort, then, in *Jesus*—in leaning on His bosom—in telling Him thy griefs? No comfort in His grace? No comfort in His love? Ah! think again; and say not, “*I have no*

comforter!—And thou disconsolate! Thou who know'st not *Jesus!* Thou who seekest for *earthly* comforters alone! What shall I say to *thee?* Why, bid thee also look to *Jesus!* Bring all thy sins to *Jesus!* Seek for a comforter in *Jesus!* If so He will not dismiss thee in thy misery; but comfort thee *indeed.*

"The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh."—ECCL. IV. 5.

ON *worldly* principles idleness is bad—to use one's "capital," for lack of putting it to "interest." In *spiritual* things it's worse by far. In earthly goods a man may have a store, and live upon it, while it lasts. Not so in grace. *There* we can have no store—no stock to go to, laid up within the soul for many days. The Christian's glory is to live from day to day—to know that in himself is emptiness—that all his "fresh springs" are in *Jesus*—daily to take his pitcher to the well; daily to gather manna for his daily wants; nay, every moment to receive out of Christ's "fulness, and grace for grace,"—(John i. 16.) Living upon *Jesus!* The food is to be found, *not in us, but without.* If it were *in us*, what need, then, to have more? We ate this morning; but eat we not again, at noon—at night? Eat we not on the morrow? Why toils the labourer from day to day? Because he cannot live upon himself. Food must be had; and for it he must *work.* "No work, no food—no food, no life"—this is his daily rule. So is it with the soul. Its only food is *Jesus*; and this from hour

to hour, from day to day, the same. Of itself, the soul is ever lean—ever in want of food. It knows no plenty but in *Jesus*; and every morsel of its sustenance is drawn from Him.—Oh! it is a miserable time when Christians live, or *try* to live, upon their own resources; to treasure up the days gone by, and feed upon their past experience; when days are dark, and nights are long—when “neither sun nor stars in many days” appear (Acts xxvii. 20);—when all is blank, and still, and dead. The Spirit moves not in the soul—and Jesus hears not, or *seemeth* not to hear—no “open vision” is there of His presence. (1 Sam. iii. 1.) The man may be perfect in doctrine, rich in experience, versed in the knowledge of the ways of God. But what is *this*? Nor doctrine, knowledge, nor experience feeds the soul. They are but *finger-posts*, pointing to *Jesus*—to tell the pilgrim where to have a meal. The man, who feeds on Christ, can feed on nothing else,—His work; His person; His love; His presence; His words; His visits to the soul; to have to say, “Jesus is with me; He was this morning; He’s with me now. With Him I am happy—without Him I am undone. Health, strength, and peace, and comfort, I have none, except in Jesus!” It is thus, and only thus, the soul is fed. Oh, then, my soul, fold not thy hands in indolence; feed not upon thyself. Seek daily strength for daily wants in *Christ*, and Christ *alone*.

“ Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail, and vexation of spirit.”—ECC. IV. 6.

QUIETNESS! To many a weary plodder, how sweet the thought—*when* he has got *enough*, to end his days in *quietness*! Quietness!—many pursue thee as a phantom; few find thee in the end; because, though love of quietness is great, the love of *gain* is greater.—“ Could I not increase my business—enlarge my warehouse, or have a second in another street? True, my ‘ connexion ’ is large enough already; my time and strength already largely taxed; but, *then*, my fortune will be sooner made; and I shall soon have *quietness* ! ” Thus often speaks the tradesman.—How many more “ join house to house,” “ lay field to field ” (Isaiah v. 8), add “ share ” to “ share,” one speculation to another—all meaning to have *quietness* at last! Alas! at such a rate, will quiet *ever* come?—But, *what* is “ quietness ! ” Is it a cottage in a wood? A villa with a pleasure-ground, and *nought to do*! Ah! quietness, like *this*, is far from quiet. What weariness, what fretting emptiness! Time, in its very course, becomes a labour; and listlessness corrodes the soul.—Then, there is the quiet of a competence, with literary ease, or country occupations—the farm, the chase, the garden, or the fond pursuit of nature’s science. There is *quietness* in *these*, it is true; but will it stand the test of time? It is quiet on the surface—is there quietness *within*? The soul, the conscience—is it quiet *there*? Does it *disturb*

the quietness to think of death, and judgment, and eternity? If quietness be thus destroyed, does it deserve the *name*? Nought is *true* quiet, but "quietness" "*for ever*." (Isaiah xxii. 17.) True quietness consists in having peace with God—a quiet *conscience*—Christ in the soul—the sense of sin forgiven. With quietness like *this*, a handful is enough; a pittance grows to plenty, and poverty to wealth.—Oh! it is a blessing to have enough to live upon; to have neither poverty nor riches; to be fed with "food convenient" for our use. (Prov. xxx. 8.) While others are oppressed with wealth, and "travail," and "vexation," that "quietness" should be *our* lot! All this, and *Jesus* too! This *quietness*! My wants supplied! And *comforts* too! All this, and *Jesus*! My lonely dwelling lighted with His presence! Each frugal meal made sweeter by His love! My walks, my works, my solitude, my social moments—all graced with *Jesus*, and His company! Is not this quietness *indeed*! My soul, if greater wealth were thine, might not this quiet be in danger—thine ease be turned to travail? Know, then, thy riches in a handful—be content.

"*A threefold cord is not quickly broken.*"—
ECCLES. IV. 12.

Union is strength, whether with two or three, or more. Thus man was never meant to be alone; and God provided him "a help meet." (Gen. ii. 18.) In *heaven* no solitude exists; neither would earth have known it, had man continued

holy. *Sin* is the cause of all the desolation, that pervades mankind. It needs an *effort* now to escape it. To make friends, and to keep them; to float within the current of society, and not be stranded by some eddy on the lonely shore—all this is done by dint of *effort*. Without it few would have aught but solitude at last.—What mean our “Corporations,” our “Societies,” our friendly Unions? They say, “*Union is strength*, and we must *work* to have it.”—In communing with God man *must* be solitary. This is another consequence of *sin*. True, there is *social* prayer; but in the single act there must be solitude. No blending there can be of soul with soul, but for a season, and by an *effort* too. Sin has thrown up its barriers 'twixt man and man. Each sinful body, each fallen mind, presents an obstacle to union felt, and realized. The sense of union with the saints must be an act of faith, an *effort*—a flash of light, of more or less recurrence—and then it is dark again. Union unbroken is reserved for better days, when sin, with all its barriers, gives way to glory.—*Union is strength*. A twofold cord is something; “a *threefold* cord is better.” Though union here is faulty, yet, even *here*, much may be done by *union*. If two or three agree together in the name of Jesus, their prayers are mighty. How strong this “threefold cord!” When they, who live together, strive jointly to resist and conquer sin, each knowing his own infirmities, each trying to improve the rest—each practising the grace of meek forbearance, and humility,—they weave a cord of many folds, and

strong endurance. But if one or other cease to pray, to watch, to strive, and to forbear, how can the cord maintain its unity, or keep its substance?—" *A threefold cord !*" But *where* can it be found in perfectness? Only in *God*—in God, distinct in persons, but in essence One—divers in office, yet in purpose undivided—one God, one Lord, Jehovah ; one, in Father, Son, and Spirit ; each, in the covenant of grace, ere time began, pledged to redeem His people ; each bound by covenant to love, to keep, to bless, to perfect, them ; all, in the unity of wisdom, majesty, and power, acting in holy concert. The Three-in-One—the One-in-Three—in mercy, grace, and truth—say, who can break *the threefold cord* of Deity ?

"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God."—ECCL. v. 1.

"BEAUTIFUL are thy feet with shoes, O child of God." With brass and iron shod, go forth to tread on all the power of the enemy. (Cant. vii. 1 ; Luke x. 19 ; Deut. xxxiii. 25.) The Preacher says, "*Keep thy foot !*" A prophet says the same,—"*Withhold thy foot from being unshod.*" (Jer. ii. 25.) The advice is good. To walk unshod is a sure way to pierce thyself with many sorrows. For slip-shod grace will ne'er

advantage thee, and never less so than in going to the *House of prayer*.—Leave not the Gospel shoes at home; nor lose them by the way. If so, you will not find them, when you come to worship.—*What* do you think, and speak of, in the way? If earthly things engage the mind—the doings of the past or coming week; the dress or manners of the passers by; the news you have heard; the letters you have had—if thoughts like these are in your mind, up to the very threshold of the door, say, will *this* forward your devotions? God's worship must begin before you leave your home; your thoughts, your speech, your eyes, be captive led. Fix them on *Jesus*, and *then* you will not have them to bestow on other things. Make *Christ* your company in the way; and He'll make *you* his company in the house of prayer; then all its acts shall savour of His presence.—In *private* worship, or in *social* prayer, we cannot, to the very last, be bent on other things, and spring at once from earth to heaven. Oh, there is a preparation of the heart; a setting of the countenance heaven-wards; girding the loins for intercourse with God; a deep conviction of His majesty; a pausing on the threshold of His presence—that the first word of prayer may have His blessing.—If thou would "*keep thy foot*" in seasons of devotion, be sure thou keep it well at *other* times, As is thy walk, thy prayers will be. A careless walk begets a wandering mind, unfit to gather in its thoughts, and settle them in prayer. Prayer and the daily walk act, and re-act, on one another. He that is much in prayer will keep

his foot; and he, that keeps his foot, be much in prayer. Nought feeds the soul like *meditation*—the habit of reflecting on our ways. This leads alike to holiness, and converse with the Lord. Then, child of God, at *all* times “*keep thy foot* ;” not only when thou goest to the house of prayer.

“*Be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools.*”—ECCL. v. 1.

In converse with a friend, it is not one that speaks, but *twain* ; and of this converse *listening* is as much a part, as speaking. So is it in communing with *God*. Time was, my soul, with thee, when prayer was but a form, and nothing more. No thought hadst thou of *listening* in prayer; of watching for the breathings of the Spirit, telling thee what to say to *Jesus*, or whispering what Jesus said to *thee*. Now, by God's grace thou hast learnt to *hearken*. Dull is the prayer-time, when thou hearest not the voice of thy Beloved. Oh, if thou canst not feel that God is speaking to thee, as thou speakest to Him; His presence telling that He loves thee, hears thee, answers thee—thy prayer will be to thee a “tinkling cymbal,” or as “sounding brass.” Oft hast thou sat before the Saviour in mute devotion—on *thy* part mute, but *not* so on the part of *Jesus*—and found more eloquence in silence than in fervid utterance. But oh! to speak, and be the *only* speaker—the Spirit bringing no response, no message from the throne! Oh then, my soul, thou fallest back

upon thine emptiness, and art sad indeed.—Be much alive in *listening*; quick to discern the voice of Jesus; ready to obey. Oft has the Spirit beckoned thee to prayer, and thou hast framed some fond excuse—some fancied duty, or yet some occupation that pleased thee better. How oft some casual book—journal—or work of art, has robbed thee of communion with the Lord! In every room—on every *table*—looking from every *window*—there's danger, more than enough for thy consistency—*beware, beware!*—Look for the *Spirit's* movings, when you pray. Grieve Him not; nor yet resist Him in His promptings. Some word has quivered on thy lips, and been withheld. And *why?* It savoured of some duty thou hadst wished to shun; some heart-confession that thy pride refused to make; a prayer for one, for whom thou didst not wish to pray. The Spirit urged it; thine heart said, "*Nay.*" Say, is not this the *sacrifice of fools?* My soul, this should not be. Be more ready, then, to *hearken*. Thus shalt thou hear what *Jesus* says—what *Jesus* thinks. Thus shall the Spirit indite thy thoughts, direct thy prayers, and nourish thee for glory.

“ *Be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools.*”—ECCL. V. 1.

OH what a tender thing is *Prayer*! How passing wonderful man's intercourse with God; God's fellowship with man! The motions of the *Spirit*, how refined! How easily repelled! How lightly interfered with! How promptly

thwarted in their action ! Say, dost thou feel a sudden burst of prayer ? Do tears flow fast ? Are thy lips enlarged in speaking to thy God ? Beware, my soul, how thou give up thy prayer, or break the current of adoring thought. True, it may be the time for *reading*. The Word may be in hand—the place be open, where thou art going to read. Or it may be in *midst* of study, when thought has been in exercise, but not with reference to prayer. Or yet you may be otherwise engaged—in secular pursuits, that may be left without a breach of duty. Quench not the *Spirit's* movings ; close with His invitation ; He is leading thee to fellowship with God. There, in the bosom and the smile of Jesus, you'll find all that is needed for the time. Are you but versed in Christian exercise, and know the lights and shadows that attend it, you will learn to seize the moment, and lift your soul to heaven *when you can*.—In studying the *Word*, if aught be sent with power to thy soul ; if thought flow quickly, and light be shed upon thee from the door, thus opened into heaven—turn not to other portions, long as the Spirit stays thee *there*. This were to dictate to the *Spirit*, to interrupt His actings, and tempt Him thus to leave thee to thyself. The treasures of the Word are *His* to unfold—*His* to apply ; and if He feed thee in this, or other pasture, He has prepared a blessing for thee *there*. You may have wished to read some other portion, as coming in its course, or as better suited to your present need. Leave that with God. Be sure that power, thus derived, will give thee

strength for *any* trial : fit thee for *any* duty ; and answer *every* end thou hadst in view. The Spirit knowsthy daily, hourly need, and He has given thee what seemed Him good. Trust, then, the *Spirit's* leadings. Strive to discern His intimations. And thus increase in wisdom, grace, and peace.

“ *Let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God.*”—ECCL. v. 2.

OF thyself, my soul, thou art incapable of prayer. By nature far from God, how *couldst* thou pray ? If something *must* be said, thy native powers can furnish *words*. But if the *Spirit* move thee not, it is not *prayer*. None but the Spirit's voice can speak to God. None but the Spirit's mind can reach his ear. *Why* does the Spirit dwell in thee ? . To be the framer of thy thoughts—the organ of thyspeech—to Godward : that thou in Him, and He in thee, might think the thoughts, and think the language of the sanctuary. To pray without the *Spirit* is the same as thinking without a mind, or speaking without the power of speech. Bright thoughts ; well-rounded periods ; the flow of sentiment, and earthly sympathies—*what* are they ? They come not from the Spirit ; they lead thee not to God. It is not what *thou* hast thought, what *thou* hast spoken. What has the *Spirit* thought ? What has the *Spirit* said, within thee ? Thy life, thine energy, thy power, is centred in the *Spirit*. In *Him* thou prayest. In *Him* thou praisest. In *Him* alone thou art a living thing. Without

Him, while thou livest, thou art *dead*.—My soul, *whence* all thy *waverings* in prayer; resolves half formed, and forthwith given up; playing with duties; uttering many things, but feeling not? Whence all thy parleyings with conscience; pleading for grace, yet half-afraid to have it; striving for sin, yet longing to indulge it; praying against some idol, yet hugging it the while. *Whence* thy discomfort *after* prayer; conscious of having dealt with God, yet not prevailed? Is it not *this*—the mind has thought—the lips have moved—without the *Spirit*? Why didst thou speak without Him? Better be silent altogether than run before his motions.—In *private* prayer, fret not, though waiting times be long—though oft thou leave the throne, and not a word be spoken. *What* couldst thou say? The *Spirit* spake not. Thou couldst not but be *dumb*.—In *social* prayer it is mostly otherwise. The need is special—the help is special, too. If one were mute, then all would wait in vain. God loves not that his saints should miss their pleasure. Thus he, who might be mute in private, is eloquent in social prayer. Thus God is glorified, and thus His saints are fed.

“God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.”—ECCLES. v. 2.

GOD is above in majesty and power. He hears thine every word. He reads thine every thought. *You* may forget what you have thought or said. Not so the all-seeing God. Beware of making

vows. Who asks them of thee? Make holy resolutions, if you will; and pray for grace to keep them; have deep convictions of your own infirmity; trust only in the Spirit's power for strength; think of the love of Jesus; be daily crucified with Christ—and thus go forth, to meet the trials of a fallen world. *This* will advance thee more than all thy vows.—Prolong not rashly thy times of worship, nor enter lightly on a course of duties self-imposed. If these be followed for a time, and then be given up, it is worse than if they ne'er had been pursued. While yet thy time remained, was it not still thine own? *Who* asked thee to employ it *thus*? God goes to meet thee at the usual hour; will He not mark thy breach of purpose?—Again, when prayer time is diminished, or study of the Word is hurried o'er, says not the Spirit, "*It was not always so!*" Thus God is mocked, and thou receivest injury. Retrograde habits speak of backward grace. Thine only safety is in going *forward*.—"Let thy words be few!" Five minutes' heartfelt prayer is better than hours of formal worship.—"Let thy words be few!" Restrain the habit of empty prayer—praying for praying's sake, it may be to eke out the moments of a given time. But say, can words too many be, when God is present with thee? Does Jesus *ever* think thy words too many? Does *He* grow weary of thy company? Did He ever motion thee to leave his presence? Thine own infirmities cut short thy prayers; Jesus can *never* wish thee gone.—Speak *often* to

the Lord, even though thy words be few. Thus moments of communion grow to *hours* of prayer. Originating thus, thy praying times are sweeter, than when they come from formal vows. Whole days may thus be spent in true devotion; in walking; eating; communing with others; thine every hour be prayerful, and thine every thought be sweet. Such seasons, oh! how precious, unutterably precious! My soul, reckon not on their lasting. Cherish them while thou hast them. Be loth to part with them. Thus, by God's grace, they may *return again*.

"Neither say thou before the angel that it was an error."—ECCL. v. 6.

ANGELS appeared on earth in times of old, bearing God's message to His people. They heard the vows then made, and might have come to claim fulfilment. The *priests* of God were called his *Angels*, or "messengers" (Mal. ii. 7), and in the Church of Christ preachers, and ministers, are "*Angels*" called. (Rev. i. ii. iii.) Had vows been made before the priest, and then excuse been offered for their non-performance, the priest would say, "Whiles thou didst promise, was it not thine own? *Why* didst thou vow, not meaning to fulfil? Thou hast not vowed to man, but unto God." (See Acts v. 4.) And is there not One, greater than angel, minister,

or priest, to claim performance of *our* vows? I mean not *formal* vows, the solemn dedication of one's self, or means, to God; all these are passing solemn, and, if broken, must pierce the soul with many sorrows; but I mean the *resolutions*, whether of more or less determination, that either flit across the mind, or assume a more enduring character. Hast thou been sick, or tried in other ways? Has danger suddenly beset thee? Ere health were scarce returned, or danger gone, did thankfulness depart? Thy vows of service—thy fervent resolutions—*where* are they? *Where* is thy change of life, solemnly plighted in the hour of need? Thy former books, thy pleasures, thy companions—are they renounced? Say not before the angel—still less before the living God, "*It was an error*; I did not mean it so. Religion is good in sickness, but in health it is not becoming." My friend, will God accept excuses such as these? Ask thine own conscience; it shall tell thee true.—And thou, my soul, I have a word for *thee*—a word for every child of God—*Think well before thy resolutions*. Even the passing thought of giving to the Lord, whether in large or small proportion of thy means, is not unknown to Him. Harbour not the thought with marked complacency, unless prepared to *act upon it*. Hold it far from thee; let it not come within the range even of slight resolve, till thou canst count the cost, and see if thou have faith to make the sacrifice. To break even passing resolutions unnerves the soul, and, more or less, impedes its healthy action. Remember, then,

with whom thou hast to do, and aye be chary of thy vows.

“ In the multitude of dreams . . . there wanteth not vanity.”—ECCLES. V. 7.

IN telling idle dreams there wants not *vanity*. It must be so; the Scripture says it. “What harm?” you say; “How can I wrong myself, or others, by telling them my dreams?” The vanity is *this*. At best, it is *needless* to describe the nothings of a dreaming hour, the mimic facts of an ideal world. The mind, that deals with Truth, thinks it a waste of breath to tell such vanities; to tread a ground, on which it finds no standing; to breathe an air without an atmosphere: sight, hearing, sound, perception, memory, all conjured up—for *what*? To tell the phantom wonders of a *dream*!—Man’s *waking* thoughts are mostly vanity—mere shadows, and no more. What are thy *dreaming* thoughts, my Friend? Mere *shadows* of thy vanity; the shadow of thy shadows; the mere reflection of thy nothings.—Dreams mostly hinge on *self*. Their world is thus shut up within the dreamer. If you hate to speak of self, it is irksome to you to recount your dreams. It is but another way of feeding vanity—to have the thoughts of others fixed upon yourself. If *Christ* be much the subject of your thoughts, you will not have heart, or mind, *thus* to employ your speech.—If it be vanity to tell your dreams, is it not vanity to *think* of them; to have the mind disturbed

because some fancies crossed it in its sleep? Yet, Reader, I deny it not, God may be pleased to visit thee in dreams, and stamp his truth upon thee in the night. *Such* dreams are not to be despised; they savour of something better than thyself.—Some simple rules will tell thee when a dream is good. Has it made you feel your sin, and taught you that you need a Saviour? Has it brought a sense of Jesus to your soul? His love for sinners? His power to save? Have dreaming thoughts thus done what waking thoughts had *failed* to do? If so, thank God for it, and treasure up your dream; yet, not because it is a *dream*, but for the sake of what it taught thee.—God's ways are various. Mostly He brings us to self-knowledge in our waking hours; but it is as light to him to do it in our sleep. Happy are they who, waking or asleep, are brought to *Jesus*. To them the world itself is one vast dream. Their true, and only waking hours, are when they feel His love. •

“In many words there are also divers vanities.”—
ECCL. v. 7.

“In the multitude of words *there wanteth not sin.*” (Prov. x. 19.) Can it be otherwise? Words are but *thoughts* made audible; the inward man clothed in external form. And what is *thought*? 'Tis but the working of the *heart* within. The heart itself is *sin*. How, then, can “*many words*” be free from it? The more the garden ground, the greater room for weeds; the more the *words*, the greater room

for *sin*.—The pride of speech is natural to man, and nought delights him more than when he is listened to. To *self* it is exquisite, to be the only speaker—to give the rein to voluble discourse, while others hearken; to tell, for hours, what self has thought and done. To worldly men the pleasure is unmixed; their conscience tells them not it is vanity, nor troubles them with sense of sin. But to the child of God it is otherwise.—I ask, thee, Christian reader, hast thou e'er spoken largely, and, in after thought, not had a sense of vanity? Thy speech has been of doctrine—of Christian duty—of all that tends to edify the soul. We'll grant it. But has not *self* crept in; self-gratulation at having spoken well—*self*, seeking to be praised for soundness, candour, or discernment? Have not the promptings of the Spirit been outstripped—thy lips gone faster than His teaching? Hast thou not spoken oft for speaking sake, loath to renounce the charm of hearing *self*—unwilling to give way to others? Poor humanity! Alas! I pity thee.—Oh! 'tis a dangerous thing to have the gift of speech—the love, and power, of letting it be known. It is well to know how we may hit the golden mean; to steer midway 'twixt cold reserve, uncourteous silence, and the opposite extreme; if need be, to speak much—if more expedient, to say little. Frankness, and openness of heart, are pleasing: a readiness to impart knowledge, experience, and information: to give one's mite to cheer the social circle with apt discourse. But be it ever done in meek submission to the Spirit, with inward self-possession

and with prayer; that self be crucified, God's glory simply sought, and the whole man be captive led. Thus to possess the soul is glorious. Say, is not this to have the mind of Christ?

"In many words there are also divers vanities."—

ECCL. v. 7.

OH! what a power there is in "*words!*" On lightning's wings they fly, bearing their messages to heart and mind, telling invisibly, yet surely, on the hearers. Who should be guarded as the Christian in his speech! How oft a thoughtless *word* turns holy talk to controversy, and vain jangling! How often, through *a word*, some worldly theme is started, then eagerly pursued, while heavenly things are disregarded! How oft a single *word* stirs discontent, brings injuries to mind long since forgotten, and sets men harping on their grievances! How oft a *word* kindles the smouldering embers of dislike, or fans the flame of scandal! These, and like evils, might be much avoided, if we would only *think* before we speak, and weigh the probable effect of what we are going to say.—It were a sad bondage to the *worldly* mind, for ever to keep watch over its thoughts and words. To careless *saints* the task is likewise hard. But, to the heart well kept, Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden light. (Matt. xi. 30.)—Reader, is this experience thine? Art thou not bound to practise what thou knowest? Why hast thou, then, the faculty of thought, quick in its movements as the lightning's

flash; strong in its powers of forecasting; in the twinkling of an eye, able to calculate effects, and stop ideas halfway 'twixt thought, and utterance? Why, but to use thy powers *well*!—Be quick in speech, if need be; but calm in thought, collected in discourse. Much may be done by *practice*; unruly tongues be tamed, loose habits be corrected, and every word be captive led to Christ.—Before you mention what you've seen or heard, say to yourself, "*Should I repeat it?*" Will it expose no faults of others? Will idle curiosity be fed, or vain remarks be made? Is it not better to keep it to myself?" Much time and comfort would be saved, did men but reason thus! Examine well the converse of a day; balance your watchfulness against your thoughtless speech. Compare the loss and gain incurred by either, and *then* you'll see that, if in careful speaking there are divers benefits, "in many words are also *divers vanities*."

"Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt."—ECCL. v. 13.

How little is *self-interest* understood! *Self* is much made of in the things of time, but little thought of for eternity. If self is body, self is also soul. After the *body-self* is laid in dust, the *spirit-self* is still alive—doubly alive for happiness or misery; self lives for *ever*. All that we do, has influence on self, its interest, or its injury. All, that self does, has bearings on its state, either in hindering, or helping its eternal

good. Man, in his blindness, sees it not. Thus "bitter is put for sweet, and sweet for bitter; good is called ill, and evil good." (Isa. v. 20.) The miser hugs his gold. To *him* his gifts are losses—all that is kept is gain. How different the Bible truth. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty!" (Prov. xi. 24.) Thus the Christian finds that what he keeps he loses, and what he gives he gains.—Oh, for more faith to see this principle—more faithfulness to *act* upon it! It is easy to avow it, where self is not concerned; but to say "Amen" to it, when *self* is called to *give*—*this* is another thing.—Reader, have you ever given in faith, and found that God increased your store? Have you ever had a hoard—a sum put by, and cherished—and yet have difficulties come and clouds obscured your prospects? (I speak not of the comfort to the *soul* in giving, or of the *spiritual* loss sustained when gifts have been withheld.) *Then* can you understand how "riches" may be "kept to the *hurt* of those that own them."—If thy means exceed thy wants, *what* dost thou with the rest? *Why* dost thou keep it? Is it for some ideal want—not to provide for children (this may be overdone)—nor yet to meet some necessary call? Is it in verity kept for *self*? Ah, what will self do with it, when self is gone? Say, for *which* then is it kept?—the mouldering corpse, or the departed soul! You keep it to your *hurt*.—Yet giving, *of itself*, boots nothing.

It neither saves nor sanctifies. (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) To give *indeed*, men must be *saints* indeed. Is love to Christ the motive of your gifts? Then are you qualified to give indeed—able to lend to God. (Prov. xix. 15.) Money, to pass with God, must all be coined in the very mint of *faith*. No loan will He avow, nor interest pay, save upon that, which bears Christ's image, and His superscription. To give in *faith*—to give in love—to give with understanding—Reader, may this be thine, and mine.

“In all points as he came, so shall he go.”—
Eccl. v. 16.

As we came naked from our mother's womb, naked shall we return, nor carry in our hand aught that we had below. (Ver. 16.) Oh, what a character this gives to earthly things! They are all connected with a sinful world. They are left behind, because they cannot enter heaven. Hence the Apostle's moral to the Preacher's truth, “Having food and raiment, *let us therewith be content.*” (1 Tim. vi. 8.) How few of man's possessions are really needed! Take food and clothes away—the rest are mostly useless. We live in times so artificial, it is hard to say what are mere luxuries, and what are needful comforts. God's servants oft are carried down the stream of vain conformity. Did they but keep the Scripture rule in mind, what loss of time and strength would be avoided! The Scripture says not, “*Be thou content,*” with-

out a reason. God would not stint His children, nor ask them to abstain from aught, merely for self-denial. It is that *injury* is wrapped in the indulgence, and good is gained in keeping from it.—I pray thee, Reader, analyze thy time, and occupations. See how far thy thoughts are lost, and energy expended, in seeking things, or doing works, that are of no real use. Even *little* things have great effects. Each want that you create; each needless article, or ornament, for house or person; every pursuit you follow must have its influence on your soul,—if in nought else, at least in *this* respect, that more or less it occupies the mind. You say, “It is but a *moment*—the thing is quickly done; the object now is *bought*, the arrangement *made*. It all falls in with daily occupations, and habits ready formed; *no harm* can possibly arise.” Oh, my friend, nothing can lodge within your mind, even for a moment, but it must tell upon your life. Experience is made up, for good or ill, by objects ever flitting through the mind. The more that Christ is thought of, the more the life is pure. The more the world is in the thoughts, the less will Christ be there. Little things soon make great things. A great world is made of *little* worldly things. Be jealous, then, with godly jealousy. Beware! Your vines have tender grapes. (Cant. ii. 15.)

"Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire."—ECCL. VI. 9.

'Tis sickening to a man to long for what he has not—for what he *cannot* have; in the midst of poverty, to sigh for plenty; to aim at luxury, and have nought but simple fare: to have dreams of grandeur and ambition, and yet to walk in humble life. To be on fire for scenes sublime and beautiful, and yet have nought before us, but the lowland flat, or village green; to think of others in sweet sylvan shades, or yet breathing the mountain air, or fresh sea-breeze, when dusty books and chimney-tops are all we have to look at; to have spent our holiday with choice companions, and then return to business company, and occupations—all this is sickening to the heart.—Oh, how "*desire*" wanders, refusing to be satisfied with present comforts! Memory revels in the past; hope dwells upon the future. The soul thus feeds on shadows, and leaves *reality* behind. There is bitterness in *this*, more than the tongue can tell. *Philosophy* says, "Repine not at thy lot, but *make the best of it*." This is cold comfort, after all. *Formality* says, "Hush! 'tis the will of *Providence*." Neither is *this* a cure for *wandering desire*.—The *Christian* has a remedy, that never fails, when properly applied—the *Saviour's presence*. *This* turns poverty to riches; invests the humblest meal with luxury; makes crowded cities pleasant

as the mountain top; imparts refreshment in the midst of labour; fills voids with fulness, and instead of absent ones, gives us the presence of the Friend of friends.—Children of God! your Father says, “*All things are yours*” (1 Cor. iii. 21)—and so they *are*, in the degree and manner that is good for you. If I am Christ’s, the gold in all the world is mine, and I have just as much as suits my interest. If more were good for me, say, would not more be given—of money, station, company, or office?—*Come back*, then, wandering *desire*! Roam not abroad over that which is not thine; *that* is forbidden ground. What is thy present lot? I pray thee, scan it well; look at it with the glass of faith—you will see a blessing in it. You will find a *Father’s* love, a *Saviour’s* presence, the *Spirit’s* comforts—wrapped in the garb of present things, and rays of glory coming from them all. Is not “the sight of the eyes,” with such *realities*, better, far better, than the shadows of *wandering desire*!

“*That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is MAN.*”—ECCL. VI. 10.

OH, what a name is “*Man*!” What worlds of meaning are shut up in its brief space of letters! What floods of evil! What depths of woe! What mighty histories! What a ceaseless round of change! The name of *man*! Once it meant all that’s comely, glorious, and happy—all that is stedfast, solid, and enduring; backward, it pointed to its Maker, God; forward, it looked to glory. Alas, how changed! *Now* it

means all that is fallen, and corrupt; all that is far from God, estranged from glory, changeable, and changeable. Such, such is *man*; such (in thyself), my soul, art *thou*.—Nothing is changeable but *man*. *God* knows no changes. The *angels*, fallen and unfallen, aye live and act on changeless principles, of good or evil. Sun, moon, and stars revolve in orbits fixed, and unvarying. Plants, minerals, and animals are ruled by laws and instincts, regular and sure. Even the uncertain weather, and the fickle wind, changeable in order of succession, change not in nature and effect. *Man*, fallen *man*, is the *one* exception to the rule. Thus changed and changeable, man has himself to thank for it. As he is the type, so is he the *cause*, of change. The first seed of *sin*, lodged in the heart of *man*, contained the germ of change; root, stem, and branch—the flower, and fruit, of all that happened since. Hence came the change of empires, dynasties, and powers; of customs, languages, and laws. Hence, the excess of cold and heat, moisture or drought. And hence, the endless changes of events, so hard to calculate, so difficult to meet. Look *where* you will, and *when* you will, there's *change*.—The Preacher says, "That which hath been is *named*." He means that *he* had named the history of the past, the order of the present, in all its changeableness—and now, in a *word*, he gives the sum and substance, the root and essence of it all—'tis "*Man!*"—But, wondrous to relate, within the precincts of that very *name* is found again all that man was at first; yea, infinitely more. 'Tis holiness in *man*;

wisdom in *man*; stability in *man*; glory and happiness in *man*; eternal life in *man*; yea, *God* in *man*; the second *Adam*—the man *Christ Jesus*! Oh! my soul, mourn not thy changes, thy changefulness, thy changeability! 'Tis overruled for good. Thou hast found thine all in Him that knows *no change*.

“*A good name is better than precious ointment.*”—

ECCL. VII. 1.

MANY who fear not God, nor care for man, think much of losing their *good name*. On *moral* principles it is well it should be so; and, failing a higher rule of action, it is wholesome for society. It is so far well to have a name for moral worth; but will your character bear *God's* inspection? *That* is the question. If your good name consists merely in human merit, I pity you, my friend. This will avail you nothing in the end. Has *Christ* said of you, “*I will write upon him my new name*?” (Rev. iii. 12.) Is *Christ* the heart, the head, the substance of your character? Are your merits *His* merits? *His name* your only trust? His *Cross* and *Blood* the rock, on which you stand—*His* character the ground of your pretensions?—And yet there is a character—“*a good name*,” the outward witness to the inward grace; “*a good report of them which are without*”—that is precious to God's people; not for their own sake, but the Lord's.—Beware of seeking a good name for anything but

Christian truth. If the world speak well of you, merely because you are kind, polite, and amiable, it is not a name worth having. Better, if so it happen, be scouted for the name of Christ, than to have praise of men for human merit.—Plume not yourself upon your character. If it is good, the glory is not yours; then take not to yourself that which belongs to *Jesus*. Oh, what an artful thing is flattery! The love of a *fair name*—how stealthily it works upon the soul! Some unwise friend commends you. You say, “Give *God* the glory; the gifts are *His*; so are the graces too; grieve not my soul by praising me.”—Your friend is hardly gone, wondering at your deep humility, when straightway *vanity returns*; you lay the flattering unction to your soul; take to yourself the praise you had rejected, and fall in love with your own character.—*Simplicity!* Thou lovely grace! How rare it is to find thee! We *all* are *actors*, more or less, and play our part, thinking what men will say of us.—A *good name*! Often it sickens one to think of it; how self has worshipped it; how self has suffered from it! My soul, beware! Glory in nought but in the cross, the righteousness, the name of *Christ*. Think not of self, nor of thine own good name.

The day of death is better than the day of one's birth.—ECCL. VII. 1.

“THIS is an hard saying; who can hear it?” Hard, yea, impossible to flesh and blood. ’Tis spoken to the *saints*; and yet it is not every Christian that can bear it—so few have made their calling and election sure.—My soul, *thou*

must plead guilty to the charge. Content with present privilege, thou hast not duly sought to realize *the world to come*. Shame be upon thee, for thus despising thine inheritance !—Reader, art thou a child of God ? If so, I charge thee solemnly, halt not halfway 'twixt unbelief, and glory. The work within thee is imperfect, if thou long not for “the Kingdom.” I mean not the desire to have done with sorrow, toil, and care ; but the desire *to be with Jesus*—to have no cloud between thee and His glory. Some men will tell thee that the desire to depart, and be with Jesus, will unfit thee for thine active duties. This is a great mistake. *Who* ever longed for *glory*—and yet *who* ever acted up to *duty*, as did *Jesus* ? Can you do better than walk in *Jesus*’ steps. Can you suggest a better rule ? Believe me, nothing will strengthen you for trial, or set you free from love of earthly things ; nothing will make you cool in danger, or wise in counsel ; nothing make earthly comforts half so sweet, or lawful pleasures half so pleasing, as the *desire to be with Jesus*—the waiting till He beckon thee to glory. —Can it be wrong to wish to be with Jesus—to long to see His face beyond all longing ? Say, *what* is love without it ? The love of *Jesus* !—His love to thee—thy love for *Jesus* ! *This* is the soul of godliness—the very principle of heaven. The more you love Him, the more will you long to be with Him. The more you love Him, the better will you serve Him. Some put away the thought of death *advisedly*, and fix the mind alone on *Christ’s return*. But is this scriptural, or apostolic ? *Paul* earnestly desired

Christ's second coming, longing to see His glory: and yet he also longed for *death*. (Phil. i. 23.) Which is the better? To wait for Jesus in a world of sin? Or to be with Him *now*, and thus attend Him when He comes again? (1 Thess. iv. 14.) Should fear of death detain thy longings here? Is it not always better to depart and be with Jesus? Reader, what has thy *birth* done for thee? It brought thee too to a world of sorrow, pain, infirmity, and sin. What will thy *death* do for thee? *Which* will to thee be better—birth or death? Say, art thou of the Preacher's mind?

"It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting."—ECCL. VII. 2.

NOT so, the worldling thinks. *He* shuns the house of woe. The darkened room—the solemn stillness—the very fact of death—disturbs him. The chastened looks, the swollen eye, the mourning garb,—all have a message to his conscience. They speak to him of what he is not prepared for—*another world*! Oh! my soul, thou canst look back, and tell what a relief it was once to *thee*, to escape such scenes, and find thyself again in haunts of vanity; *then* thou couldst breathe once more. But things are altered. For *now* thou findest in the house of woe a pleasure, that thou wouldst not find in worldly merriment.—*Why* is it so? Is it thy meat and drink to hear the mourner's sob, to see the tear, to listen to the tale of sad bereavement? Oh,

no!—but 'tis a feast to thee, *because* thou feedest there upon the Saviour. He's present with thee in the house of mourning. Oft there thou meetest with all the saints, in all the fragrance of affliction sanctified—the stars of promise shining upon them in the night of sorrow. Thou gatherest light and fragrance to thyself in communing with *them*. Christ's glory, seen on them, alights on *thee*. Thy soul is full with feasting upon *Jesus*. But it is not *always* so. It is not in *every* house of woe, that faith and grace are found. In *some* the name of Christ is neither named, nor welcomed. It is *then* thine hands hang down; such visits pain thee to the heart. Yet even *then*, the house of mourning is better than the house of feasting. For Christ goes where thou goest; stays with thee *there*; and when thou com'st away, attends thee *still*.

“*Sorrow is better than laughter,*” the Preacher says (ver. 3). When things are bright, and sorrow far away, the soul too oft forgets that all is vanity. The sight of sorrow brings that truth to mind; lays bare the secret sin, the dormant frailty; shows us at once our deep necessities, and their remedy in Jesus. To weep with them that weep; in *their* frail humanity, to be reminded of our own; to sympathize with sorrow, till the springs of woe are opened in ourselves—all this is good. It is better than a feast. The bark of faith mounts on the flood of sympathy, bearing the soul to Jesus. The house of mourning is a blessing. It presents a void, that *must* be filled; sorrow, that *must* be comforted;

corruption, that *must* be turned to glory. It *shuts us up* to Christ; and is not that a feast?

"It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools."—ECCLES. VII. 5.

NONE question this most wholesome truth; but few there are who take it home. "Let *others* be reprov'd; but, as for *me*, I cannot bear it." Thus speaks the human heart. My soul, many are thine infirmities, and none more humbling than thy dislike to take reproof. Did I believe myself so vile as I profess to be, could I take fire at hearing of my faults? "*The least of saints! The chief of sinners!*" Such do I call myself? A vain confession, if I am not prepared to welcome kind reproof! Oh, for more knowledge of myself; more of that chastened mind; more of that genuine humility, that says, "*Amen!*" when self is justly censured. Oh, what a hypocrite thou art, my soul! Ready to feed upon the praise of others, and shine in fancied excellence—how mean, how passing mean, art thou in thy reality! If those, who think of thee most highly, saw how thou bear'st reproof, *what* would they think of thee? Oh, there is a majesty of soul; a greatness more than human—in welcoming reproof. *Music* is sweet. Its cadences fall gently on the ear, and tune the heart to favour those who make it, and thank them for their melody. Thus shouldst thou feel, when kindness prompts a friend to tell thee of thy faults. *What* can a friend do *more*? What could a friend require

more of *thee*? How grateful shouldst thou be to him, who wounds *himself*, in healing *thee*; willing to bear thy wrath, rather than suffer sin upon thee.—“*The rebuke of the wise!*” Who is “the *wise*” here spoken of? He that is wise enough to be *faithful*. Don’t say, “He is not entitled to reprove me. His youth, his station, or his character, unfit him for the office.” Hadst thou a *thorn* hurting some tender part, would any be too young, too low in rank, to draw it forth? Or wert thou locked in *prison*, would any be too vile to turn the key, and give thee liberty? The only question to be asked is *this*, “Has he, then, told the *truth*? Is the failing really *mine*? Has he hit the nail upon the head?” If so, thy thanks are due to him. Even though he be mistaken, and charge thee wrongfully, yet shouldst thou *thank* him for his good intentions.—Reader, is this saying hard to *thee*? Well, so it is to *me*. Of myself I cannot hear it, and I say, “Alas! *who* is *sufficient* for these things?” Say, wouldst thou have this grace? I fain would have it too. Then, what remains for thee, and me? To learn of *Jesus*—of Him, who did no wrong, yet meekly suffered (1 Pet. i. 21—23)—to study *Jesus*—to hide ourselves in *Jesus*—that we, in some poor measure, may *follow* Jesus too.

“*The song of fools.*”—ECCL. VII. 5.

IN nought is character displayed more than in love of *Music*—the *kind* of harmony that satisfies

the hearer. The songs of drunkards in their cups bespeak the taste of those who sing them. The martial air, the plaintive ditty, the flaunting ballad, speak for themselves; each tells the *mind* of him, whose choice they are.—The effect of music on the soul is most mysterious. The *ear* is pleased with it, it knows not *why*. The *heart* responds instinctively, in cadences as measured as the air, that tunes its sympathy. It is not the sound alone; not the mere chain of notes, vocal, or instrumental; not the bare fact of melody, nor the harmonious blending of melody with melody. All this is purely *physical*—of itself it speaks no moral. *It is* that it finds within the breast a secret, and responsive agency—a wondrous something, that accords with it—a harmony of feeling betwixt him that hears, and him that penned the melody, as real as the tenor and counter-tenor of the music.—This principle is native in the soul—as much a part of nature, as the mind or members. With few exceptions, men cannot hear sweet sounds, and be insensible. Hence it exerts a wondrous agency for good, or evil. Tastes are imbibed, propensities encouraged, and habits formed, unconsciously it may be, yet most decidedly.—Have you never watched your mind, while listening to melody? Have you never traced its *after* tendencies in thought and feeling? Have you never found yourself more grave, or gay, more noisy, or more thoughtful, according to the sounds, to which you have listened? I counsel you to trace these agencies of mind—to analyze your habits, tastes, and feelings—and, if

you are given to music, to watch its bearing on your character. In this, as in all your works, see how to grieve the Spirit least, how most ensure the Saviour's presence.—If sacred sounds attune to holy meditation—suggesting thoughts of better things—awaking sweet remembrances of *Jesus*, and thus disposing thee to intercourse with *God*—say, has not *other* music an influence as *real*, in strict accordance with its character? See, then, I pray thee, that thy tastes lead not to folly in thy melody; for surely, if thy soul be injured, thou art not wise to harbour it; it then becomes “*the song of fools*” to thee.

“*Better is the end of a thing than the beginning.*”

—ECCLES. VII. 8.

ARE *all* things better in their *end*—good things as well as bad—things pleasant, and things painful; is it alike with *all*? Is *summer* best, when ended? Time spent with choice companions—a walk with a bosom friend; are *these*, too, best when past and gone? Are parting sighs better than smiles at meeting? The truth is *this*—all that man does is *sinful*; nought passes through his hands without defilement, thus giving birth to sinful actions, thoughts, and tendencies. Thus *all* things *human* begin, and end, in *sin*; sin in the “blade;” sin in the “ear;” sin “in the full corn in the ear.” Is not the *end* of *sin* better than the beginning?—Each sinner's course is best when *ended*; a sinful life is closed, and

God is glorified, in judgment or in grace, what-e'er the sinner's end.—A sinful *world* will be far better in its *end*; for then God's kingdom will appear, eternal righteousness come in, and sin and sorrow disappear for ever.—Things pleasant bring temptation: the while they last, we are never proof against it; when they are ended, the *danger* is at an *end*, and *this* is better.—The Christian should esteem each evening better than the morning; for then there is one day less to come, of sin, of conflict, and temptation—one day the less between the soul and glory.—Say, Christian, wouldst thou consent to live thy days *again*? Wouldst thou have the shadow to return upon thy dial (Isa. xxxviii. 8), even for an hour? Wouldst thou bring back thy thoughts, thy words, thine actions? Wouldst thou have *self* dug up, e'en from the grave of yesterday—to gaze upon its doings? That be far from thee, O my soul! *All* things to *thee* are best, when *ended*. What-e'er there was of *pain* is gone; what-e'er there was of *pleasure* is replaced tenfold. While the thing lasted, pleasure was mixed with pain, enjoyment marred by sin; but now the thing is gone, thou mayest be glad. When all is gone, *Jesus* is left behind; salvation, mercy, grace, and peace, all left behind; the end of other things shall make no end of *them*. *Jesus* is left! All joy, no sorrow—all peace, and no temptation, left in *Him*! Then say, canst thou regret the end of times and seasons—the end of all that is sweet and tender, loving and refined? Canst thou regret earth's

brightest joys, since *Christ* is left behind? Is not the Preacher right? *Is the beginning better than the end?*

“The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.”—ECCL. VII. 8.

Pride is the opposite of *Patience*. Man is impatient, since he is *proud*. Am I impatient with the ignorant—it is that I pride myself upon my knowledge. Am I out of patience with the vulgar—it is from the conceit of my own superior breeding. Many are proud, who think it not. Because they make confession of their sins, or condescend to men of low degree, they think they are humble. But let vexations come—have they to bear reproof, to meet the faults, or ignorance of others, impatience tells the truth—they are *proud*, not humble.—Impatience argues *ignorance of self*. Wouldst thou be patient—look at thine own corruptions; survey thy features in the Scripture glass; consider well thine own deformity; study the failings of thy character. Ah! if thou know'st thine heart, *none* will appear so vile, so ignorant, so trying, as *thyself*. Thou wilt wonder *then* how men can bear with *thee*, and *not* how thou canst bear with *them*.—Wouldst thou be patient? Think of the cross of *Christ*. *What* nailed him to the tree? The bloody sweat; the crown of thorns; the tears; the pains; the taunts; the buffetings; the piercing cry; *what* caused them all? *Thy sins and mine!* Christian, remember *this*—thy sins and mine. Canst thou feel this, and be

impatient!—Think of the *pit*, from which He snatched thee! Think of the *price*, at which He bought thee! Think of the *grace*, with which He clothes thee! Think of the *bliss*, with which He will crown thee! Say, canst thou think of *this*, and be *impatient*!—Man prides himself on many things—his wit, his rank, his power, his moral goodness. For *this* he sets before him some model of perfection. But, oh! my soul, thou hast a pattern to consider—the *God of patience*! The more of patience, then, the more of *God*—the more of *Jesus*; the more of *God*—the more of glory, majesty, and greatness. The more impatience—the more of Satan, the more of all that's vile. Were pride allowable in any *he* might be proud, who is *patient*. But he knows that *this* is not his own. He cannot boast; from God he had it—to *God* he gives the praise; and, by his patience, gives glory to the God of patience more and more.

“*Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry.*”—

ECCL. VII. 9.

Of human passions none is so quick as *Anger*. Hence by a *hasty* one, we mean an *angry* person: thus man instinctively writes his own character in the words he frames. Satan, indwelling in the soul, invests the passions with a wondrous power—and on the stock of fallen nature is engrafted the strength, agility, and cunning of the *fiend*. Hence all the quickness of the passions; hence the electric speed, at which they move. Temptation lures—then lust conceives—

sin is brought forth—the work of moral death all finished *in a moment*.—Say, *who* can trace the progress, from the first *thought* of anger to its outbreak? Oh! my soul, I gaze on thee and wonder, to think of all thy properties and powers. Within thee dwells a world of mystery. *Where* lurks the poison in thy veins? In what secret principle is hid the element of anger, ready to show itself so quickly? To see thee, in thy gentler mood, who could suppose thee capable of violence? No tinder less inflammable, when free from sparks—no lake more calm, when undisturbed by winds—than *thou*, when not exposed to provocation. *What* angered thee, my soul? Thy brother differed from thee! He *dared* to have opinions of his own! And *so* you lost your temper!—Or, yet, some one reproved thee, slighted, or contradicted thee! “Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth.” (James iii. 5.) The veriest trifle sets thee in a flame.—Do thy brother’s *failings* anger thee? Thou sayest, “My feelings are acute; I cannot bear it.” My friend, God bears with *thee*! He sees thine every sin, and *yet* He loves thee, bears with thee!—Boast not of *sensibility*; it is a *carnal* thing. “*Fine feeling*” merits not the name, save it be joined with *meekness*. All true refinement comes from *God*. Nowhere can it be learned, save at the cross of *Christ*.—Restrain thy feelings; smother thy sensibilities. When words grow quick, be prompt to check them. Deal with thy passions, as the Psalmist dealt with wicked men; *be dumb with silence*. (Psa. xxxix. 1—2.) Oft hast thou said, “I

will not speak a word." But resolution failed. You spake—your brother answered; reply provoked retort—it was then all over with your meekness! Then learn from thine experience; scan well the spot where once thy feet have slipped, and, as thou nearest it again, *beware!*

"Anger resteth in the bosom of fools."—

ECCL. VII. 9.

God's estimate of folly is different from man's. In Scripture words, the *godless* man is a *fool* (Psa. xiv.), the *base* (Job xxx.), the *rash* (Prov. xiv.), the *slanderer* (Prov. x.), *mockers* (Prov. xiv.), *idolaters* (Rom. i.), *lovers of pleasure* (Eccl. vii. 4), the *undutiful* (Prov. xv.), *self-confident* (Prov. xxviii.), the *spendthrift* (Prov. xxi.), and, as here, the man of *angry* passions (Job v. 2; Prov. xiv. 17). It *must* be so. God's Word is ever right. Wisdom is the opposite of folly. Wisdom, we know is peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. Meekness itself is *wisdom* called—the wisdom from above (Jas. iii.)—the wisdom of the angels; of saints made perfect; the wisdom of God Himself.—Is meekness wisdom—then anger must be *folly*. Does not thine own experience confirm it? *When* wast thou *happy* in thine anger? A savage pleasure it may give thee, while it lasts; but leaves it not a *sting* behind?—Is it, then, wise to be *unhappy*, when thou canst have it otherwise? Is it wise to lose thy temper, and thus reap anger's bitter fruits? The heaving breast; the flashing eye; the smart contention; the sullen mind; the feeling of

estrangement from each other; and conflicts betwixt thy duty and thy moodiness, betwixt pride and due confession of thy fault—*when* did these make thee *happy*? *When* camest thou uninjured from thine anger? *Whom* didst thou hurt the most—thyself, or him, with whom thou lost thy temper?—Does anger help thee in thy *prayers*? Canst thou draw nigh to *Jesus* in thy wrath? Or if He visits thee, how looks He on thee? Canst thou return his look? Ah, no; thou dar'st not look on *Jesus* in thy folly.—Say not, “*I cannot help it.*” Most injured words! How oft they are spoken wrongfully in sin and shame!—“*I cannot help it!*” Grieve not the Lord the *Spirit*. Is *He* not ever with thee? *Whose* is the power? *His*, or *thine*? Is anything too hard for *Him*? Can *He* not cope with thine infirmities? Can *He* not make thee strong? When anger rose within thee, and the first crimson mantled on thy cheek—when angry words first quivered on thy lips—was not the *Spirit* prompt as thou? Did He not say, “*Forbear!* Do not thyself this wrong?” *Why* didst thou slight the Comforter? Was He not right? *Why* saidst thou, “*I do well!*” (Jonah iv. 9.)—Meekness is wisdom; anger is folly. This we may learn from *Moses*' history. When *Moses* walked in meekness, he was wise—for *then* he found favour with God, and dignity with man. (Num. xii.) When he was wroth, he proved his folly. For *this* he forfeited his entrance to the promised land. (Num. xx.; Deut. i. 37.) My soul, it was written for *thy* learning. Then learn thy lesson well.

"Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days are better than these?"—ECCL. VII. 10.

SUCH questions are not wise. They savour either of ignorance, or discontent. If former days were *really* better, it is discontent—if not, it is ignorance. At all events, days past, and present, are just what God has made them—it is bad to raise the question.—Faith takes matters as they come. Blind unbelief asks many questions; it often says, "*I wonder!*" One says, "Trade was far better ere I entered business—*I wonder* how it is!" Another, "Markets were better ere I took to *farming*—*How can it be!*" A third, "Fortunes were sooner made, when I was *young*—*Why does it happen thus?*" "The seasons are not what they once were," exclaims a fourth—"all rain, no sunshine; *what* can the reason be?"—*What* are the times, my friend? *Who* made, *who* ordered, them? Out of whose bosom came they? *Who* holds them in His hand? To quarrel with the times is to find fault with *God*. He hath made them beautiful in their season. (Eccl. iii. 11.) If they please thee not, *whose* fault is it? Couldst *thou* have made them better?—Examine well the links, that interweave time present with time past—the curious chain of providential dealing. Look at the ordering of events; one hanging on the other, in sequence perfect, though mysterious. Survey the mighty texture—God's will, God's providence, the wondrous workings of His power. *These* are the warp and woof, the sum and substance, of the times; times past, times

present, and times future ; your times and my times ; the times of all men in all ages. To change the *times* were to derange the ordering of Providence from first to last ; to break the golden chain ; to mar the beauty of the structure. God's dispensations revolve in orbits fixed and sure, all moving, acting, following, in perfect order. To pluck one cross event away—to change sunshine for rain, or rain for sunshine—sorrow for joy, or joy for sorrow—easy for strait, or strait for easy—were violence as great, as to arrest the planets in their course, or sweep a constellation from the skies.—You say, “Times past were better than the present.” Is *God* less present *now* than then ? His paths more intricate ? His ways less sure ? Has grace, then, changed its character ? Is it harder to be found ? Is *Jesus* not the same ? Is man less wicked *now* than then ? Does he deserve a milder treatment ?—Measure not times against times—thy lot against the “fortune” of thy forefathers. Measure thy “lot” with *thy deserts*—and say *which* best becomes thee, to thank God or *complain* !

“ *Wisdom is good with an inheritance.*”—
ECC. VII. 11.

WISDOM is good, *with* an inheritance, or yet *without* it. But without wisdom an heritage is bad. He, that inherits nothing, may be wise

to "gather substance, and leave it to his babes." (Ps. xlix.) But to inherit substance, and not be wise to husband it, is dangerous. Many are wise enough to plod, and use their earnings well, who have not wisdom to employ what *others* leave them. Nought tries our wisdom more than substance, suddenly inherited. Some men make shipwreck of their *virtue*, others have lost their *reason*, upon the quicksands of an *heritage*. A poor exchange indeed!—*What* is it constitutes the love of money? It is something more than the desire of *having*. There is in *money* a mystery of power, to dazzle and to turn the brain; a *something*, that intoxicates the man, and makes him other than he was before.—Poor human nature! Never so little, as when the greatest in thine own conceits; never indeed so wretched, as when thou think'st thyself most enviable!—Oh! it is a sight, to see a man unchanged by an inheritance; with all the "*faculties*" he had before; nor lifted up in manner, nor suddenly transformed in style of living! It is sad to lose your friend in his new equipage, or fine estate! That *money* should loose the bonds of fellowship, or cool the flame of love! Yet so it is—alas for poor humanity!—"Wisdom is good with an inheritance"—wisdom to humble thee beneath thy riches; to make thee blush at thy prosperity, and tremble for thine honour; wisdom to clothe the naked; to feed the hungry; largely to give to God what God has given to *thee*; wisdom to look to *Jesus*; to look beyond thy riches; wisdom to desire a better heritage—that which is "incorruptible."

(1 Pet. i.) Woe to the man that has an heritage, and lacks *this* wisdom.—They, that bequeath an heritage, cannot leave wisdom to their heirs; but *God* ne'er gives His heritage, but, with it, He bestows the gift of wisdom; wisdom to know the value of the heritage; wisdom to love it; wisdom to adorn it; wisdom to live according to the grace bestowed; wisdom to discern evil from good, and good from evil; wisdom to resist the world, the devil, and the flesh; wisdom to know that earthly wisdom's nought, and thus to seek the wisdom "from above." Reader, this wisdom, and this heritage be *thine*!

"Wisdom is a defence and money is a defence."—

ECCL. VII. 12.

"Money" defends a man from many ills; from hunger, cold, and nakedness; from being houseless, friendless, penniless. It will save a man from injury and insult; many oppress the poor, who would not vex the rich. *Money* invests a man with dignity. *Money* will often save from death; food, medicine, nurses, medical attendance, may all be had for money. *Money* will help a man to right; it pays for "justice," and thus "defends" from loss of property or character. *Money* will bribe officials, and save from weariness and loss of time. *What* will not money do in this poor, mercenary world?—"Wisdom," again—mere earthly wisdom—"defends" from much that is hurtful. *Wisdom* devises remedies; is fertile in resource; and often saves from poverty or shame. It will solve perplexities; and, under

Providence, will change adversity to prosperous seasons. *What* will not wisdom do, if there be only scope to use its powers! Yes, *money* and *wisdom* are means for earthly good; but *there* they stop. *What* do they in the hour of death? *What* in the judgment day? Can *money* purchase heaven? Can *wisdom* renovate the soul? Can it know the truth of God? Can it clothe with righteousness, and cover sin?—*Wisdom* and *money*! Place not thy confidence in either. Will they ease the burdened conscience, or heal a blasted character? Can they bring back the father to the fatherless, or dry the widow's tears? Many would change their "better fortune," as it's called, for early days of competence, or toil, with less to tempt and dissipate the soul.—I trow there is many a Christian student sighs for his first experience, ere zeal for "honours" hampered him, and spoiled his singleness of heart.—Learning that has to be unlearned; storing the mind with what must be forgotten—Reader, beware of *this*. It will not help thee, either for thyself, or for the cure of souls.—*Wisdom* and *money*! Wouldst thou be wise and rich? Be wise in *Jesus*—be rich in *Him*. He is thy wisdom: He thy riches too. *This* wisdom giveth life. *This* wealth redeems from death. There is no defence like *this*. "*Excellent*" knowledge—"excellent" possession! It will guard thee here, and perfect thee hereafter; arm thee with power; beautify with grace; invest with glory. In giving *Christ*, it gives thee *all*. It gives thee wisdom—it gives thee riches durable and true. (Prov. viii. 18.)

“*In the day of prosperity be joyful.*”—ECCL.
VII. 14.

Prosperity, thou meteor of bliss, *who* woos thee not? *Who* seeks thee not? From earliest dawn of hope, ere life's first prospects are begun, thou flitt'st before the mind. *What* merchant, tradesman, man of learning, or aspirant for fame, but thinks he may be *prosperous*! Some call it “*Providence*.” Some call it “*Fortune*.” Some call it neither—yet *all* desire to be prosperous.—Prosperity is the gift of *God*. The Preacher says, “*In thy prosperity be joyful;*” yet he would also say, “*Rejoice with trembling.*” (Ps. ii. 11.) *God's* gifts are good, if rightly used—*all* meant to be received with thankfulness. *All* may be sanctified, if by the Word of *God*, and prayer. (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.) Prosperity is sweet, but dangerous. It makes the worldly man tenfold more worldly; and men of *God*, from being prosperous, have pierced themselves with many sorrows. (1 Tim. vi. 10.) It is well when prosperous times come *gradually*; not from a sudden rush, but step by step—for then the soul is not so apt to lose its balance, and to forget the Giver in his gifts. Hast thou been prosperous in life? I ask thee, how is thy soul affected by it? *God* gave thee thy prosperity; has it drawn thy heart to *Him*? Has having *little* made thee long for much? Has having *much* made thee desire *more*? Has it eclipsed salvation from thy view, and made thee think the less of heaven? Hast thou asked a blessing on thine increase? And, ere you placed it in

your coffer, have you, in spirit, shown it to the Lord, that He might sanctify it? Has *He*, then, shared your store? Have you well considered the snare infolded in each shining piece, and prayed for grace to use it well? Has each step in thy prosperity enlarged thine heart—humbled thee, proved, and bettered thee? There is nought in gold itself to lead astray. It is in the heart that loves, the mind that misapplies, it. *Grace* is sufficient for prosperity; nought can withstand the power of grace. It is well to find a sweetness in prosperity; to eat thy meat with pleasure; to enjoy thy comforts; to be thankful that poverty is not thy share—*yet* to rejoice with moderation, and a chastened heart; seeing a snare in all things, and watching unto prayer; knowing that *this* is not thy portion; not thine inheritance. It is only thine *to look at* for a season; use for thy need; and, in the end, to *leave behind thee*! Thy true prosperity is in better things than these.

“*In the day of adversity consider.*”—ECCLES.
VII. 14.

IN thine adversity *consider* that thou deserv'st it all; that, hadst thou nothing but adversity, it only were thy due; that every moment free from trouble is a mercy. Had the full curse been poured on thee and me, our life were nought but sorrow and vexation.—*Consider* that God afflicts thee for thy profit, to bring thy sins to mind, and lead thee to the Cross. Believer, God chastens thee in love, to make thee still partaker of His holiness. (Heb. xii. 10.) How oft hast thou

forgotten Him! But *He forgets not thee*, and thus He chastens thee. Consider, how much thou livest to the world—how little to the Lord. How earthly, sensual, and devilish thy nature! Thy thoughts, how vain! Thy service, how unprofitable! Consider, then, God's love in chastening thee.—Art thou in sickness, consider thy many days of former health—*all undeserved by thee!* Consider thy many helps in trouble, God's presence, and His grace—*all undeserved by thee!*—In sleepless nights, consider how many nights thou hast slept soundly and sweetly—*all undeserved by thee!* Consider Him, who gives thee songs in the night—*all undeserved by thee!* In poverty, consider how all thy former wants have been supplied—food, raiment, lodging, and so many comforts—*all undeserved by thee!*—Hast thou incurred the loss of sight or hearing, the loss of limbs, or power of using them; consider, then, thy former powers; how much enjoyment thou hast had in seeing, hearing, moving, handling—*all undeserved by thee!*—Art thou kept from going to the house of prayer? Are all thy Sabbaths spent at home—it may be on a bed of languishing? Consider how many Sabbaths thou hast spent in full enjoyment of the means of grace—*all undeserved by thee!* Consider Jesus, the Fountain of all ordinances; the Bread of life; the Shepherd of the sheep; the Prophet, Priest, and Teacher of His people. Still thou hast Jesus—Lord of the Sabbath, the spring of Sabbath blessings—*all undeserved by thee!*—Thou tried believer, CONSIDER, then, thy light afflictions; they are *but for a moment*;

ordered in wisdom, tenderness, and love. CONSIDER *Jesus!* what sufferings He endured—all for unworthy thee! Then faint not, nor be weary, but *consider* the “weight of glory”—glory eternal—glory “far more exceeding” than thy woes—glory, *all undeserved by thee!* (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

“*God also hath set the one over against the other.*”

—ECCL. VII. 14.

ADVERSITY “*over against*” prosperity; prosperity “*over against*” adversity; balanced against each other with unerring skill; in each, respectively, the due proportions nicely weighed, *so nicely*, “*that man should find nothing after God*” (ver. 14), that none should say, “It might be better done.” The word is to the *wise*. Then, Christian, I appeal to *thee*. *Could* it be better done? Say, are God’s ways unequal? Have they been so to *thee*? It is true, thy path is chequered—sweet chasing bitter, and bitter sweet, in quick succession. It may be that bitter is more frequent than the sweet—that *thy* prosperous times are few and far between. Is there no *reason* for it? Is the balance, then, deranged? *God* knows the reason, though unknown to *thee*. He keeps the balance true between thy wants, and their supply—between His chastenings, and thy good. He is not—*cannot* be—unkind, unequal, or untrue. Perhaps you cannot hit upon the sin, and say, “For *this* I am chastened.” But say, my friend—if there is no special *sin*, is there no special *want*? No grace to

strengthen—no infirmity to check?—God's ways are *always* equal; His purpose well matured. How beautiful His providence! How exquisite His skill! Grace poised against temptation, joys against sorrows; the lights and shadows of experience thus perfected, and perfecting each other. Were all *prosperity*, souls would be lifted up; were all *adversity*, the soul would always faint.—God's ways are equal; *look back and see!* Had times been pleasant with thee, experience been sweet? How surely they were followed by deadness in the soul! Thy joy was gone—thou knew'st not *why*. Ah! but *God* knew it. It was the *adjusting of the scales*, that nothing might exceed.—Or had *work* gone prosperously, whether in earthly things, or in the cure of souls. Sooner or later, crosses came—some disappointment, something to bring thee down, something or other, counter to thy will—it was the *adjusting of the scales*.—And so with health, and other comforts—God keeps the balance true. Watch it in great, watch it in little things; the events, the thoughts, the feelings of the day. You will always find it so—*the balance must be kept*. Hence all thy variations in the scale of comfort—the endless shades of thine experience. All this ordered well, that thou, and I, might *find nothing after* God—nor say, “He has left his work undone.”

“*Be not righteous overmuch.*”—ECCLES. VII. 16.

How can this be? Can any man have righteousness to *spare*—goodness sufficient for himself, and for his brother too? False creeds may teach

us this—not so the Preacher. When zeal o'ersteps discretion; when tasks are self-imposed; when *forms* are trusted in; when flesh is vainly mortified—all this is being “*righteous overmuch*.” God’s people fall unwittingly into this very thing. *Prayer*, as a task, persisted in, that we may think how *long* our prayers have been—this is a great mistake. It is wrong in principle, and practice too, I prithee, look and see. Have you never been more fretful after prayer, more worldly, more inclined to levity? The truth is *this*—you prayed too long; your mind was over-taxed; your soul responded to your weariness. The enemy rejoiced in your infirmity—you were “*righteous overmuch*.”—Or yet you have found refreshment in the *house of prayer*. You have gone a *second* time, and found the same. You went *again* (three services, three sermons in a day!)—the third occasion undid the other two. Trying to have too much, you lost it all. The wearied brain could not recall its former exercise; the jaded memory broke down—you were “*righteous overmuch*.”—It is oft the same in *reading Scripture*. The mind is proud of its performances, and does too much. To read each day so many chapters; in such a time to have gone the round of Scripture—rapidly to move from History to the Prophets, from the Gospel to the Law—and, in the hurry, to embrace doctrine and practice—the prayerful mind, and critical research—my Friend, you are “*righteous overmuch!*” This is not the way to grow in grace, or knowledge. Were you to spend a lifetime over a *Psalm*, gaining each day refreshment to your soul—it were better far,

than thus to scamper through the Word, and do so little after all.—When household duties are neglected for the sake of prayer, *this*, too, is being *righteous overmuch*. The same is true when men are incommoded by our prayers. The servants waiting in the hall, the carriage at the door—the elements meanwhile preferring their complaint, while prayers too lengthy, or deferred too late, engage the company—say is not this being “*righteous overmuch*?” Prayer, meditation, and the Scriptures—how good they are! Yet there is a *time* for all things. If duties rise so thick, that you are hindered in your prayers, even *this* is better than prayer persisted in, and *duties left undone*. Beware, then, Christian friend, and be not “*righteous overmuch*.”

“*Be not overmuch wicked.*”—ECCL. VII. 17.

Is there a point in wickedness, which men may safely reach, but which it were dangerous to overstep? Can we covenant with justice, that it spare us? or agree with vengeance, that it touch us not? (Isa. xxviii. 15.) Will God wink at transgression, because it is *small*; or pardon sins, because they are *few*? Has man a light side, and a dark; goodness to make amends for folly; virtue to neutralize his sin? Is corruption only partial? Have we wherewith to remedy the Fall? *One sin* brought ruin on Adam and his race. *One sin*! Was there, then, no virtue left; no room for further license; no redeeming power in the soul? Was wickedness *already* “over-

much?" Let Scripture answer. Let our own imperfect faculties, inbred corruptions, and fading nature tell the tale. We are fallen, fallen, fallen in body, mind, and soul. *Innocent* enter we the world? Ah, no—ingrained with sin, even from the cradle; steeped in corruption from our mother's womb. Our sin is *born* in us—its germ wrapped in the buddings of our infancy, and drawing its nurture from our growth.—*Overmuch wickedness! What* can be overmuch, where *all* is much—*comparison's* degrees all lost in universal sin. *Man* makes comparisons—*God* knows them not. Our very breath is sin—one *moment's* life involves it; one passing thought incurs the charge,—*Overmuch wickedness!* Do not mistake the Preacher. He warns thee, sinner, to pause in thy career, not to run riot in thy wickedness; to go no further in tempting God, and trifling with thy soul. Ere the door of grace be closed, or thy heart be hardened more, he urges thee to think upon thy ways. Ere health be ruined in the haunts of vice; ere power of thought be lost through idleness; ere life itself be sacrificed in sin—he tells thee to retrace thy steps.—*Overmuch wickedness! What* is it? The next round of worldly pleasure; the next visit to the alehouse; the next solitary glass; the next breaking of the Sabbath; the next scoffing at the Word—this may but seal thy doom, *this* may be overmuch wickedness to *thee!* *Beware, then, oh, beware!* "From this" advice "withdraw thou not thine hand." (Ver. 18.) *Beware, then, oh, beware!*

"He that feareth God shall come forth of them all."—ECCL. VII. 18.

"COME forth " of *what* ? Come forth from dangerous extremes ; from snares on either hand ; from being over righteous, or wicked overmuch. There is wondrous depth in Solomon's experience. He always hits the nail upon the head ; and Gospel light only confirms his sayings. Can it be otherwise ? The Same, who spake by Paul, or Cephas, guided the pen of Solomon. Is it not true, my Christian friend ? Art thou not exposed to danger, on the right hand and the left ; now tempted into carelessness, now led to hush thy conscience wrongfully ; one moment to neglect thy duties, and the next to build too much upon them ? How needful, then, the Preacher's warnings ! How comforting his promise, that *grace* shall do its work from first to last ! By *grace* we are *chosen* ; by *grace* we are *called* ; by *grace* made *willing* in the day of power. (Ps. cx.) By *grace* we *live*. By *grace* we *stand*. By *grace* we are *kept*. By *grace* we *persevere*. By *grace* we enter *glory*. But for this *grace*, what could we do ? No faith, no hope, no strength, no peace, were ours. How could we battle with our sins ? How rise above temptation ? How flee from snares ? How overcome the enemy of souls ? How but by *grace* ? How but by power not our own !—In Solomon's day it was still the same. God called his chosen ones. By *grace* He saved ? by *grace* He sanctified ; by *grace* He glorified them. Without this *grace* how could the

promise stand? Man's strength is nothing; his perseverance nought; his good intentions less than nothing. It is not man's "*will*"—God's "*shall*" is that, which does it. God says, "*It shall be*;" "He that feareth God *shall come forth* of them all." These promises are given, not to exalt, but humble us. Boasting is excluded. By *what* law? The only law that *could* exclude it—the law of *faith and grace*. (Rom. iii. 27.) Tell man that *he* can do it—you feed his pride, deceive his soul, and only lead him further from God, and deeper into sin. Tell him that *grace* must do it—you humble him low in the dust of helplessness. My soul, God's Grace has saved thee, built thee on Christ, and watered thee. It is God Himself has laid the topstone of thy glory, while saints and angels shouted, "GRACE, GRACE unto it!" (Zech. iv. 7.) Oh, my soul, thine only hope is *this*—that *God* is *faithful*; that, having loved His own, He loves them to the *end*. (John xiii. 1.) In life, in death, through all eternity, this will thy glory be—that Grace has done it all.

"*There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.*"—ECCL. VII. 20.

God's ways are perfect—perfect in wisdom, holiness, and power. God knows no change—no shade of turning. (Jas. i. 17.) God's *words* are perfect as Himself; in meaning definite; in truth unbending. God's only standard of morality is *God Himself*; His only test of worth, His

own intrinsic purity. With God "*just*" means just, as *He* interprets justice—integrity without a flaw.—"*Goodness*" is likeness to the living God; for God is good—and "*good*" means *God*. It means all that is holy, pure, and wise; with no admixture of aught that is not godly. How, then, shall "man be *just* with *God*?" (Job ix. 2.) When "judgment" forms the "line," and "righteousness" the "plummet," *who* can abide its test? (Isa. xxviii. 17.) *Whose* character will square with such a scrutiny? Think it not hard. To have a *lower* test would set aside the principles of justice. God were no longer just, no longer good, did He not judge thee by His own perfections. Reader, does not thy very conscience tell thee so? Instinct informs thee of God's character. Would He be *God*, if fallen creatures feared Him not? And *wherefore* fear? Because the conscience feels that God is just, and deals with us accordingly. What means the fear of death; the shrinking from God's presence; hiding (nay, I should say, the *wish* to hide) from His all-seeing eye? Why frightened at a shadow? Why startled at a leaf? Why have a dread of darkness? But because thou knowest that *God is good*; that *God is just*; and thou thyself art neither just, nor good. Reader, wouldst thou have fellowship with God? Wouldst thou inherit glory? Thou must have righteousness, and goodness, perfect as God Himself. Nought else can equal thy necessities—nought else comply with God's demands. *Where* can this perfectness be had? Where, but in *Jesus*! Art thou "*in*

Christ," my friend? Ah, what a question! How much depends upon the answer! Sayest thou, "Yes!" or "No!"—*Art thou in Christ?* If so, that spotless robe, that perfect righteousness is *thine*; for it is Christ's; and thou art made the "righteousness of God in *Him*." (2 Cor. v. 21.) Would *less* suffice thee? Does God require *more*? As *Christ* is, so art *thou*—holy, and just, and good; good in God's goodness; perfect in God's perfection. Even "*in this world*" it is done. (1 John iv. 17.) By faith it is done *already*—nought can be added—nought shall be taken from it. *As Christ is, so art thou.*

"Take no heed unto all words that are spoken."

—ECCLES. VII. 21.

THAT which to *thee* is spoken, it is wise to hear. All else it is wise to disregard; it is not intended for thee, either by God, or man. Thy neighbour's thoughts are sacred. Till he impart them, thou hast no right to have them; they are strictly *his*. That, which he speaks to others, is not *thine*. Even though he speak of *thee*, thou art not right to listen. Does not *thine* own experience tell thee? Are not thy thoughts *thine* own? Words are but *thoughts* expressed; thou meanest them for those, to whom they are spoken. Thou deemest it invasion of thy privilege, if others come to listen. So is it with thy neighbour. The devils have as little right to heaven, as *thou* to penetrate, unbidden, into thy brother's mind. Hence, in all ages, *listening* has been condemned.—*Why* listenest thou, my Friend?

To hear others *praise* thee? Harken not; it is very poison. Or dost thou listen to *thy censure*—to know what evil they will say of thee? If possible, this is worse; it is very *treachery*. Take care, then, how you listen. To hear self spoken of *at all*, is odious. It is instinct in the soul to hate it. It is nature's tribute to its own deformity. Conscience of its fall, it shrinks unconsciously from contact with itself.—If you hear others in secret conversation—if possible, go from their presence; if not, then make a covenant with your ear; lay curiosity aside, and be determined not to hearken. If you *can't* but hear, then *make it known* that so it is. If this would wound their feelings, then hear, and *hearken not*. Let not their converse lodge within thee. As words succeed each other, dismiss them from thy door; dwell not upon them for a moment; they soon shall be as though thou heardst them not. In this, as other things, *practice* does much; and with the *Spirit* it will do even more.—In *Spartan* days a man was punished, not for the theft, but because he had not skill to *hide* it. How oft do we *think* evil of another! But if we hear another *thinking aloud* of us, our anger soon is stirred. We are ready to take vengeance on the *show* of evil; the hidden evil in ourselves we overlook. Oh, then, deal leniently with others; severely with thyself. Think of thy ways, thy failings, thine infirmities! Think of thy many thoughts; think of thy many words; and, as thou wouldst that others deal with *thee*, so likewise deal with *them*!

"I said, I will be wise ; but it was far from me."

—ECCL. VII. 23.

READER, how oft have *you*, how oft have *I*, experienced this ! A greater one than you or I, expressed the same. The good he *would*, he did not ; the evil that he would not, that he *did*. (Rom. vii.) My soul, *how* is it ? Within thee dwells the Holy Spirit—the Lord of life and power. None can resist His will. And *yet*, the evil that is in thee gains the day ; strength becomes weakness ; wisdom is turned to folly,—light to dark. *Which* is the greater wonder—that, being foolish, thou art ever wise ; or that, at times so wise, thou ever shouldst be foolish ? How often, on thy knees, thou hast seen the way so straight, the light so clear, God's grace so strong—that thou hast felt wisdom were thine for ever ; that folly never would dwell in thee again ? And *yet*, my soul, what tales of after folly hast thou had to tell ! In your better moments, wisdom is nigh ; *so* nigh, it seems a part and parcel of yourself ; it seems the eye you see with, the ear you hear with, the air you breathe, the framework of your thoughts, the substance of your mind—your very being seems suffused with wisdom. At other times wisdom is *far* from thee—*so very far*—as far as innocence from sin, as man from God, as earth from heaven. In truth it *is* so. Wisdom was never *thine* ; it has no part in thee. Between thee, and thy better self, is fixed a gulf impassable ; of breadth unmeasured ; of depth untold. On either side the gulf art *thou*, and *wisdom*. On

this side *wisdom* ; on the other side art *thou*. Oh, what a mystery!—thy days are spent on one side, or the other; either in wisdom or in folly. Now flesh is uppermost, and now the Spirit,—no union can there be between the two. Each moment of thy life thou livest, or to *thyself*, or *God*. My soul, bless God for thine experience; in mercy is it given. It is not for nought that wisdom seems to elude thy grasp. It is not for nought that thou hast felt thine own infirmity; that thou hast known the fitful nature of thy frames and feelings; the bitterness of broken purposes; the flimsy nature of thy best resolves; the lightning speed, with which sin comes between thee and thy vows; the wondrous ease, with which thou passest from wisdom to thy folly; from thoughts of good to deeds of evil; from meekness, humility, and patience, to petulance and pride; from all the virtues of a saint to all the sinfulness of fallen nature. It is not for nought that thou art mortified, to see thyself so fickle, and so vile. It is to bless, to teach, to humble thee, that when thou wouldst be wise, *wisdom* is far from thee.

“ *That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?* ”—ECCL. VII. 24.

WISDOM is far from man—far off as sight is from the blind; as far as *God* is far. The blind see not the object, whether far or near. Thus, man discerns *himself* as little, as he knows *the Lord*. In ceasing to know God, man ceased to know *himself*. Then light and knowledge winged their flight away, and all was dark in-

deed. Sail round our planet, if thou wilt—all distant *earthly* things come near to thee, and thou to them; but *Truth* is still as far from thee as ever—no earthly figure can express its range. Soar upwards, if thou canst; for ever wing thy way onwards, and on, and on; how hopeless ever to reach the end! It is *infinite*! Far off as *that* (if possible, still farther) is man from Truth, and Truth from man. Nought but a miracle brings man and Truth together. *God speaks*, and it is *done*. The *Spirit* enters, and wisdom lives again; man knows himself; he knows his sins; he knows their remedy; in *Christ* he knows his *God*. Till *then* grace, truth, and peace were far away; the *Lord* was far; all, *all* was far! Now all is *nigh*.—God's judgments are a *deep*, a *mighty deep*. (Ps. xxxvi. 6.) All that *God is*, all that *God does*, is *deep*—His Word, His attributes, His grace, His providence, His essence, His eternal being—all, all is *deep*. Say, *who* can fathom it? "It is high as heaven, what *canst* thou do?" deeper than hell, what *canst* thou know?" "Canst thou by searching find out *God*?" (Job xi. 7, 8.) Measure the waters in thine hand; mete out the heavens with the span; take up the earth's materials at a grasp; then weigh the hills in scales, the mountains in a balance—*then* mayest thou measure *God*; *then* mayest thou fathom *Truth*. The plainest Scripture is too deep for thee. The shortest precept—the simplest promise—beggars thine understanding, and confounds thine heart. But *grace* supplies a line, wherewith to fathom what is fathomless. "*Faith* is the substance of things hoped for; the

evidence of things not seen." (Heb. xi. 1.) The Christian fathoms all things; what *can* be known, he knows; what *can* be seen, he sees. The rest he leaves, in full assurance of its truth—more glorious in what he *knows not*, than in what he *knows*. In *this* he rests on sight; in *that* on *Christ*, in whom he knows, and sees, and trusts, and lives—in whom he hopes to *reign*.

"I applied mine heart to know and to search and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things."—ECCLES. VII. 25.

We live in stirring days, when *deeds* are everything—when closet work is oft neglected for active business, and little time is given to *meditation*. Yet, with more thought and prayer, activity were greater in the end, and all our actions more successful. Time is not lost that is spent in *meditation*—in searching wisdom's ways, and seeking out profound realities. There is that pauseth oft, and yet does *much*. There is that hasteneth, and does *little*. None works so heartily, nor reaps so fully, as he whose wits are sharpened by prayer, and *meditation*.—Reading, apart from this, does little good. It is much the same as not digesting what you eat. It is living on others' thoughts, and having none yourself—this only starves the soul. How many read the Bible thus! If thought is exercised at all, it is but to find what *Commentators* say; and thus they have all their

knowledge second-hand. How different when the *mind* is bent on what we read, and help is sought from *God*, to aid the meditation.—The art of *thinking* is difficult at first; but “practice makes expert;” it may be learnt by dint of effort. It is well to set yourself a task. You say, “I am quite unused to meditate. *How* shall I *begin*?” Deal gently with yourself at first. Select your subject—some passage from the Word. Then fix the time you choose to give; say, *five minutes* at a time. Begin, and think *aloud*. This makes it easier, and saves the mind from abstract thought, the hardest task of all. The sound even of your own voice will help you; it is next to speaking to a friend. And what is meditation, but *communing with self*, that self may be a constant *hearer*? But, more than all, make it a time of *prayer*—of communing with God. *This* helps the matter greatly. You take the words of Scripture. Ask *Jesus* what they mean. In doing this the mind is exercised. A glow of thought attends the effort. You honour *Jesus*; and He will honour *you*, by pouring out a largeness of capacity—a quicker mind. The interchange of thought betwixt you and *Jesus* goes on apace, and you are surprised to find how long the exercise has lasted. Thus *meditation* grows, the more it is encouraged. It feeds the soul, expands the minds, increases thought; but, best of all, it brings thee into fellowship with *Jesus*. This is the very *life* of thought; the edge of all intelligence; the soul of *meditation*.

“*One man among a thousand have I found.*”—
ECCL. VII. 28.

Not a rough guess of numbers, but “counting one by one.” (Verse 27.) Only “*one man among a thousand!*” The Preacher tells us elsewhere the *kind of man* he meant—one who interpreted God’s Word, and ways, intreating men to listen; one, who declared the righteousness of God, in contrast with the sinfulness of man; one, who bore messages of grace to sinners’ souls—in short, he meant a *Christian*. Of such he found but *one* among a *thousand!* (Job xxx. 23.) Was grace less frequent *then* than *now*? In Christian England (England, *Christian called*) would Solomon still find so *small* a number? We might expect that greater honour would attend the mission of the Comforter—that when He had to take the things of *Christ* (John xvi. 14, 15)—Christ born, Christ crucified, Christ risen, and Christ glorified—His teaching would be seen, and known, the more. Yet *still* we mourn the smallness of the numbers. *Still* narrow is the way; *still* strait the gate; *still* few that find it—*still* broad the road to misery; how many walk in it! (Matt. vii. 14.) “*One man among a thousand!*” Ah, were it one in a *hundred*; one among *ten*; one out of *five*; or even one of *two*—it were sad to think how many still were lost! Full well we know, but for the grace of God, *not one* among a *thousand* would be found. One of a *million* would there be? One of a *generation*? One of a *world*? No, *not one!* God gives the character of man; man as he is by *nature*; man

unregenerate, unvisited by grace; man without Christ; man without God—"There is *none righteous, no not one.*" (Psa. xiv.; Eph. ii.) One of a thousand is a miracle of grace; even one from Adam to Adam's latest child, were still a miracle; a greater wonder than if ten thousand worlds were formed anew, and twice ten thousand Suns sprang daily into being.—Reader, art thou a *Christian*? If so, thy heart and mind present a miracle of miracles; a wonder greater far than aught that nature has to shew. Art thou disposed to mourn the smallness of the number—that Christians are so *few*? It is well to mourn—yet better to rejoice; better to know that all the *flock* are saved; that none are written in the Book of Life, but they shall surely come to glory. They ne'er shall perish, none pluck them from the hand of *Jesus*. He is pledged to guard—to love them to the end. Who chose, will call them; who calls, will keep them; who keeps, will glorify them—His word is sure. (Rom. viii. 30.)

"*A woman among all those have I not found.*"—
ECCL. VII. 28.

It is a hard saying—who can hear it? One *man* among a thousand the Preacher found; but among these of *women*, found he *none*! Is woman's heart, then, different from *man's*—harder and blinder, further from grace and truth? First in transgression, was it *thus* she bore the penalty, till she undid the harm, by giving birth to *Jesus*? If, till *then* a blight was on her, *since* then it is far otherwise. Last at the Cross, first at the grave, of

Jesus in faith, in charity—in patience, steadfastness and zeal—she shines pre-eminent. Look where you will, she is foremost in the cause; look where you will, among the saints, she far outnumbers *man*. Yet, Solomon's experience confirms our own—that *then*, or *now*, in woman or in man—from first to last—it is *grace* that makes us differ,—Man's nature, since the Fall, has known no change. The heart, apart from sex or age, has been the same in blindness and corruption. Lawgivers, patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, bear witness to the fact, which still we have before our eyes. Were godly women rare with Solomon, it was that God called fewer by his grace. Are they *now* more numerous, it is that more are *called*—God makes them willing in his day of power. (Psa. cx. 3.)—*One* thing we learn from Solomon—that the fair form of *woman* conceals a heart as hard, and sinful, as that which dwells in *man*,—that beauty, elegance, and softness, have no effect upon the soul, save to ensnare it—that all the blandishments of art, and gay attire—with all the fascinations of her nature, enhanced a thousandfold by education and a polished life—bestow no real excellence on woman. What are they but the “whited sepulchre?” Within its walls are “dead men's bones,” and “all uncleanness” (Matt. xxiii. 27),—all the infirmities, and sins of fallen nature—the same corruptions, passions, and affections, that reign in rougher *man*. By nature more impressible, more easily affected by outward things—so far she is more *devotional* than man; more frequent in the house of prayer, to forms and ordinances more

attentive. But *still*, within her there is found an ignorance of God, and opposition to the truth. She requires the same Almighty power to renew her soul, as needs the vilest of the other sex. How beautiful when woman's brought to *see* her own deformity, and say, "*All this is true!*"

"*God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.*"—ECC. VII. 29.

THE *origin* of evil who can tell? *How* found it place in God's creation! *Satan* infected man—and *there* we stop. It is not for us to search what never can be known, or guess at that which God has not revealed.—All that God made was very good. (Gen. i. 31.) No taint of sin was *on* it—no seed of evil *in* it. God could not give birth to evil; His attributes of wisdom, holiness, and goodness, alike forbid the thought: the thing is impossible. Essential excellence harbours not imperfection; eternal being implies unchanging good. *Sin* was a pure *invention* of the wicked one, made from his own materials; he found them not in the fair works of God,—Man, self-apprenticed to the fiend, has learned the lesson well. Trained by the devil, now, for threescore hundred years—no wonder if he is clever at inventing evil. Each circling year beholds new forms of sin; fresh means of doing mischief; fresh vanities discovered; fresh ways of setting at defiance good sense, good order, and good feeling; new blinds to youth, and inexperience. Man's ingenuity is racked for fresh *amusements*—in other words, for fresh

temptations—while grosser evil drives a busy trade in tricking out fresh stimulants to vice.—
 —ut, oh! my soul, why go so far from home?
Within thyself the sin abounds. *Thou* hast also learnt thy lesson in the school; fertile in evil as thy fellow-man, thou art not behind him in *invention*—in giving birth to evil. *Whence* all thy readiness for sin? Thine ingenuity to frame excuses? Thy quickness in devising reasons why *self* be gratified, and duties put aside? How apt to veil thy faults! How quick to seize the opportunity of pleasing man! In how many ways thou triest to cheat the Lord, and rob Him of his service! How often hast thou countenanced the world, and set thy seal on its inventions, by following its pleasures and its sins! What is thy life, and what thy nature, but one invention of all that's evil! Mankind at large are but a magazine of "arts." What endless shades of character! What difference in sin! (Isaiah liii. 6.) No two alike in the complexion of their failings; each mind, each character, framing its special faults, inventing ways peculiar to itself; but all alike showing an ingenuity for sin. How true the Preacher's word that "God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions!"

"A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine."—

ECCL. VIII. 1.

WHAT makes the difference between the well-bred, and the boor? 'Tis *education*—the being

versed in *wisdom*. You see it in the gait, the speech, the manners; the eye expresses it, the very features tell it; you read it in the whole demeanour. Thus a man's wisdom *makes his face to shine*.—If thus it be with earthly wisdom, much more is it the case with *heavenly* understanding. In giving vigour to the soul, and planting there a godly principle, it sows the seeds of higher bearing. It gives learning superior to the "schools;" it treats of things unseen by mortal eye—of agencies unfelt by mortal man; it brings before the mind a science more profound than all the depths of man's philosophy. *These* treat of matter only, or of mind; *this* treats of God himself, His nature, attributes, and will. It penetrates the veil, that severs God from man. It shares the angels' thoughts. By faith it sees what they behold more nearly, and, in its heaven-born powers, has deeper notions of the truth than they.—If learning "makes" a man the "gentleman," say, *who* should be refined as he, that learns from God Himself, and gets his wisdom in the school of Christ! If good society improves the manners, *who* should be courteous as the man, who is daily in the company of Jesus; imbibing from His presence the bearing of the saints; breathing the atmosphere of heaven! Have you not seen it in the Church of Christ—the altered mien; the softened look; the chastened speech, of one who lately was far otherwise? The eye bespeaks a change, and, in its new expression, tells you that Jesus dwells within. Can it be otherwise? Can God be there, and no one know it! The Com-

forter be there, nor cause the face to shine ! Who has not witnessed it in men of low degree ! Their manners straight assume a dignity above their station. They have seen the King of kings, and learnt true feeling, manners, and politeness. The worldling wonders *where* they have learnt it. He may deny the principle, but cannot deny the *fact*. His conscience tells him it is something godlike—*hence* he dislikes it. He sees no charm in godliness. The shining face thus shines in vain for *him*. It speaks to him of what he neither knows nor loves—the life of God, and principle of heaven.

“And the boldness of his face shall be changed.”

—ECCL. VIII. 1.

READER, what is the meaning of the text ? Perhaps it seems to thee obscure. Then bear with me a moment, while I tell thee my thoughts concerning it. If haply I have found the mind of Solomon—the mind of *God* in Solomon—this is well. And may it thus be blessed to thee and me ! *Boldness* is holy or unholy—either effrontery or honest confidence. Wisdom removes the one, and gives the other.—The *Pharisee* is bold from ignorance. He is blind alike to God’s requirements, and his own defects—*hence* he is not afraid, and thinks himself prepared for death and judgment. *Such* boldness is not safe. I hope it is not *thine*.—How different the boldness of the *Christian* ! He is bold (and justly so) because his sins are cancelled, and his pardon sealed ; because, in Christ, he

stands complete—trusting in promises unchangeable—and built on faultless grace. Through sense of perfect love he is bold even for the judgment day. (1 John iv. 17.) He owns himself the least of saints—the chief of sinners—and *yet*, in Christ he is not afraid. Thus he, who once was bold in ignorance, has now his *boldness changed*.—The Pharisee fears not the evils of his heart; sees not the danger of temptation; but plunges boldly into sin. How different the child of God! (Prov. xiv. 16.) He *once* was so; but *now* he dares not tamper with his sins. Knowing how weak he is, he ventures not a step, but in the strength of *Jesus*. He fears to meet his trials, to combat his infirmities, or face the enemy, unarmed with grace—and, in his helplessness, he throws himself on Him, who is pledged to succour him in all his need. “*The boldness of his face*” is “*changed*” in every way—*here*, changed to fear—*there*, changed to boldness once again. What once he feared not, *now* he has learned to fear—the world—the flesh—the devil. And, having learned this fear, he has also learned how to be bold in *Christ*. Armed from God’s armoury, and clad with power, in faith and prayer he runs his daily race. Where duty leads, he feels that it were wrong to fear. Where grace demands a sacrifice, he is bold. Ever and anon he chides his fearful heart, and listens for the voice, “BE NOT AFRAID, ’TIS I.” (John vi. 20.) None can prevail, but he that is bold in *Christ*, and none shall fall, but he that is bold in *self*. Reader, may you and I be bold aright!

"I counsel thee to keep the King's commandment."

—ECCLES. VIII. 2.

SOLOMON preached loyalty,—that every soul be subject to the higher powers, and "all the ordinances of man" be kept, as unto God. (Rom. xiii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 13.) But, doubtless, Solomon looked higher than to earthly laws, and, by "the King's commandment," meant *the Law of God*. This was the statute book to Israel—their only code, alike for spiritual and earthly rule. But *who* could keep this holy law? *None* ever kept it; none keeps it now; and no man ever will. It asks for perfectness, which none can yield; it claims a penalty, which all must pay, except they be in Jesus. (Gal. iii. 10, 11.) "*Do this*, and thou shalt *live*," the precept ran. (Luke x. 28.) Where none could do it, it was plain that none could live. It was but a law of death. It was only given to prove man's inability—to be a school-master to lead to Christ. (Rom. v. 13; vii. 13; Gal. iii. 19—24.) Such was the King's commandment. Then *what* did Solomon mean, by telling us to keep what never could be kept? By faith he pointed to the *types*,—the dying goat, the bleeding lamb; through them he pointed to the Saviour, the Lamb of God. *Jesus* on Sinai sat (Acts vii. 38; comp. v. 30—32), from thence He gave the law, "*Do this*, and thou shalt *live*." (Lev. xviii. 5.) But from the Cross a new commandment came, "*Believe*, and *live*!" Henceforth this was to be the law of life and death. *Believe, and live!* believe

not, thou shalt *die*. (John iii. 18, 19, 36; xvi. 9; Mark xvi. 16.) The Jews had asked, "What shall we *do*, that we might work the works of God?" (John vi. 28.) They wished to find some royal road to keep the law, and thus to save their souls. Jesus replied, "*Believe* on Him whom He hath sent." (Ver. 29.) The reason is plain. Christ kept the law; Christ paid the penalty. Believe on Christ, and then thou art one with Him; thy sins are His; His righteousness is thine. Christ kept the law. Not for Himself He kept it, but for *thee*; that thou, in faith, might say, "I have kept it too,—in Christ I have paid the penalty." And thus the two commandments meet in one. Am I in Christ, I have kept them both. "Do this, and live!" In Christ I've kept it. "Believe, and live!" Through grace I've kept it too.

The new command includes the old; hence all its virtue; it destroys not, but fulfils. (Matt. v. 17.) Yet know, my friend, it is not in thee to keep even this new commandment. This were as hard as to fulfil the old. To us it is "*given*" "to believe,"—faith is the *gift* of God. (Phil. i. 29; Eph. ii. 8.) Could'st thou, of self, believe, grace were no longer grace. Obedience to the faith must come from God, that He be all in all.

"*And that in regard of the oath of God.*"—

ECCL. VIII. 2.

THE old command was binding. Israel had themselves to keep it. (Ex. xix. 8.)

It was binding as an *oath*; it was sealed by *blood*; a *covenant* between God and man,—*God* bound to recompense obedience, and to punish sin; *man* bound to keep the law, or suffer for it. Thus man had bound upon himself his own destruction; for who could keep the covenant he had made? No *formal* oath had been expressed either by God or man, but *virtually* both had sworn. The *better covenant*, the new command, had better promises. With *it* man, in his sinfulness, had nought to do. *God* in His unity (Gal. iii. 20),—the Three in One,—devised, contracted, and performed. The parties were the Father and the Son; God the eternal Father; and God in man—Immanuel—the man Christ Jesus; each party pledged; each able to perform; each qualified to covenant with each other, since each alike incapable of change. The *Spirit* heard. (John xvi. 13.) The covenant was *His*, in common with the Father and the Son. He pledged Himself, as well as They, to call, to cherish, and to keep, the heirs of glory. This covenant was ratified by *oath*. God swore to *Abraham*. (Gen. xxii. 16.) He swore to *David*. (Psa. lxxxix. 35.) Before the worlds He swore to *Abraham's seed*, and *David's Son* (Psa. cx. 4), “whose goings forth” had been “from everlasting.” (Mic. v. 2.) This *oath* was made to assure “the heirs of promise,” that they might know God's certainty of purpose (Heb. vi. 17), and, through the comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. (Rom. xv. 4.) God's word is passed, His oath is given, that all His Church shall live. To Christ He gave

His chosen ones. (John xvii. 6.) By *oath* they are His. By *oath* He calls, by *oath* He keeps them; by *oath* He promises to give them grace; by *oath* He is pledged to give them glory. With men "an oath for confirmation" ends the strife. (Heb. vi. 16.) When *God* has *sworn*, say, Who shall doubt His word? He says, "*Believe*, and live!"—God sware in promise; yet *once* He *sware* in *wrath*, that sinners should not see His rest. (Psa. xcv. 11.) And why? Because of "unbelief." (Heb. iii. 19.) This oath is *still* in force; the King's command is doubly fenced; salvation pledged by *oath* to all the saints; eternal death denounced by *oath* on unbelievers. Believe, and live; believe not, and be damned. (John iii. 36; Mark xvi. 16.) God's word is fixed; His oath is passed; for ever sure, in heaven, in earth, in hell. The Lord hath spoken. Who will not fear? The Lord hath sworn. Who will not be afraid? Hear His command: *Believe and live!* No terror *then* His oath inspires. It will be the ground of all thy hopes, the comfort of thy soul.

"*Be not hasty to go out of His sight.*"—

ECCLES. VIII. 3.

IF earthly monarchs claim respect, and courtly manners are required of those who serve them, much more is kingly honour due to Him, who made the world, and rules it. That man should have fellowship with God! Oh, what a mystery! The mystery, however, is scarcely

less, that, with the privilege, man should forget the majesty of Him, with whom he has to do—*One*, among other courtly rules, is to retire backwards from the throne—ever to turn the face to him that sits upon it, and not to go unbidden from the kingly presence. Shall lesser deference be paid to *God*, the *King of kings*? If reverence is due on coming to His presence, is it not due on leaving it? Should we not wait the beck of His dismissal? If He have more to say, shall we be loth to hear, or slight the honour of His condescension? Can time be better spent? Can we so soon exhaust the royal bounty? Before thou rise, let it be told thee by the Spirit, “’Tis time to go!” He will not let thee be a loser, if thou thus confide in Him.—Quit not the throne too suddenly. Slide not at once from prayer to earthly things. Resume not hastily the thread of occupation. Be slow to act upon a thought that struck you as you went to prayer,—while in the very act of kneeling down; this would encourage thought to come again unseasonably.—If you have left the friendly circle, that you may pray, beware lest fond excitement flutter you the while, tempt you to hurry your devotions, and mar your intercourse with God.—If interrupted in your prayer, and called away to do some needful thing, go cheerfully. In any wise, be not provoked with him who thus, unwittingly, I trow, disturbed you. If able to resume your prayer, you will find it has not suffered by the shock. If not, God knows your mind. Be still,—He will give thee audience at another time.—

In social worship, it is unedifying to engage in secular discourse the moment you are risen from your knees; forthwith to take a public journal, or other reading of the kind; to give an order to your servant; or make engagements for the day. Better allow a space to intervene (be it however short) while you retire backwards from the throne; and, ere you leave the royal ante-room, have time to say, "Lord, look upon thy servant, he is going now to meet the world; *be with him still*." Pardon his want of reverence, and, as he leaves the throne, *be with him still!*" Such rules are needful. They seem the "*little things*" of grace, but they are great in deed. If followed out, they keep the mind more able for devotion, and make it taste "the powers of the world to come." (Heb. vi. 5.) The closer company you have kept with Jesus—the more you have prayed in spirit—the slower you will be to turn to worldly things; the more devoutly will you retire from the throne. The more the eye has gazed upon the sun, the more the earth will be a blank to look upon. Such tests are wholesome. By these we try the tone of our devotions, the nature of our fellowship with God.

"Stand not in an evil thing; for He doeth whatsoever pleaseth Him."—ECCL. VIII. 3.

HAD Lot remained in Sodom, or lingered in the plain, he must have perished in his folly. Then "*stand not,*" sinner, in thine evil ways. The Lord is full of power. He does whate'er

He will. He can even take thee at a stroke, or give thee over to a hardened heart.—And thou, *Believer*, wast *thou* not in the Preacher's mind, when thus he spake? "The wise man *feareth*, and *departeth from evil*." (Prov. xiv. 16.) This is the wisdom of the saints. Tarry not in temptation,—flee quickly from it. Think of "Lot's wife," nor look behind.—Thou findest thyself in front of some forbidden thing; it comes invitingly—unasked—unsought for. Thou seemest almost *privileged* to look, to hear, to dwell upon it. Flesh pleads entreatingly, and hints that "*Providence*" has put it in thy way. And so it did; yet not to tempt thee into sin. As said a minister of God, long since departed, the door was opened that thou mightest shut it, not to invite thine entrance; and God permits these trials of thy faith, to prove thy faithfulness. Be stern, then, with thyself. Sin cannot lose its sinfulness, however plausible it be. Flesh is still flesh, and must be crucified. Grace is still grace, and grace must have its way.—Again, some duty presses, and time is short; a hurried step carries you swiftly on. You meet a friend; "you have not time to stop." You see a crowd. What is that crowd to thee? But vain curiosity comes in; you stop to see, and slight the secret warning, "*What dost thou here?*"—Or else some novelty attracts thee,—some book or print, set there on purpose to entrap the passers by. How charming to the enemy to see thee stop; to find thee standing "in an evil thing;" to catch thee mixing with the multitude, wasting

the time in vanity!—It is dangerous to walk abroad in scenes of vanity, with nought to do. You are sure to meet with evil,—something to look at, which you should not see; something to hear, to which you should not listen. On principle, it is well to hurry on, steadily, if thou can'st not rapidly. Loungers are ever wrong; for them mischief is aye in store. Life is a journey through a land of foes. “Haste for thy life!” must still thy motto be. Haste for consistency! Haste for thy purity! Hasten for thy peace! To tarry, mostly, is to go astray. *Forward* in grace; *Forward* in thought! *Forward* in occupation! *Forward* even in thy daily walks! No time hast thou to tarry,—no time to waste,—no time to stand. Then, Christian, *forward*—aye, *forward* go!

“Who may say unto Him, What doest thou?”—
ECCLES. VIII. 4.

“WHERE the word of a King is, there is power.” (Ver. 4.) What word, what power, are like the *Lord's*? With *earthly* kings words may be loud, and power small. Days, months, or years, may intervene before the power fulfils the word, and makes it sure. Not so with God. His purpose knows no hindrance. His Word can never fail. Who can resist His power? With God, purpose, and word, and power are but one. Past, present, and the future, are all the same to Him; they form but one iota of eternal being,—but one unbroken surface of

identity. "*Who*," then, "may say to God, *What doest thou?*" To intercept His purpose, thou must have lived from all eternity; been born before the actings of His will forbade the Word, and thus have foiled his power. Infinite, unchangeable, Almighty,—with God, to *will* is to perform; to *speak* is to proclaim His past eternal purpose, and his endless might. Who may arrest His hand, or thwart His providence? Who *may*? That is not the word. Rather, who *ought to wish* it? Who ought to quarrel with His will, or say, either with bold or fretful opposition, "*What doest thou?*"—Thy child is taken; mayhap the shipwreck has bereft thee, at a stroke, of *all* thy family; or other ills untold, unspeakable, have made thee drink the wine of desperation. My friend, these things were purposed from "before the worlds." In God's eternal mind was it written,—it was settled long ago. (How vain to say, "*What doest thou?*") And when the time was come, God sent His messengers—noiseless, unseen, invisible—to do His righteous will. Could'st thou have said, "*What dost thou* with my child? *What dost thou* with the winds and waves?—forbear!" Ere it was known, it was done. Before thou heardest it, it came to pass. Thy will was not consulted,—thy leave not asked. Thou can'st not say, "*What doest thou?*" Say not, "*What hast thou done?*" Be dumb, and say, "I opened not my mouth, because thou *didst* it." (Psa. xxxix. 9.) "What shall I say? He hath both spoken to me, and *Himself has done it.*" (Isa. xxxviii. 15.) Go softly all thine

years,—yet not “in bitterness of soul.” If thou hast faith in Christ, thou art better taught than this. Go softly,—yet in faith, in patience. Looking to Jesus; let thy language be, “*It is the Lord!* Let my Lord do what seems Him good.” (1 Sam. iii. 18.)

“*A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.*”—ECCL. VIII. 5.

THERE is a book more difficult to read than human “works,” however hard they be; a language harder to decypher than all the dialects of human speech. It is the book of “*time and judgment*,”—the volume of God's dealings with the sons of men; to read His doings and observe His ways. (Psa. cvii. 43.) In times of public trouble, or domestic woe, it is easy to “afflict the soul,” and, as a bulrush in the wind, to bow the head; to wear the garb of sorrow; and to throng the “churches” on the solemn “fast.” (Isa. lviii. 5.) All this is done, and yet the soul discerns not “*time and judgment*.” Outward distress it sees; it feels the chastening; yet it cannot see the call to penitence, and faith, and prayer,—to think of judgment, and the world to come. Purblind is man—hopelessly blind, till grace enlighten him. “Lord, when thine hand is lifted up, they *will not see*.” Thus spake the prophet,—thus speaks the prophet still. (Isa. xxvi. 11.) Nor is it mere acquaintance with prophetic lore; to know the dates and systems of inter-

preters ; to say " The times are threatening ; the end is approaching ; the Lord is at hand ! " My friend, is Jesus precious to your soul ? Do you expect His *coming*, because " you love His *cross* ? " Do you " hold the former resurrection " (Rev. xx.), because in soul and practice you *now* are *risen* with Christ ? (Col. iii. 1.) Do you in righteousness, soberness, and godliness,—in deep conviction of your sin,—in heartfelt yearning for the souls of men, look " for *that blessed hope* ? " (Tit. ii. 12, 13.) Oh, this is wisdom ! Oh, this is to discern "*both time and judgment* ; " to read God's dealings, as He means them ; of every lifting of His hand to feel your soul aware ; your heart responding to His providence, as pulse to pulse ! If so, you are like the men of Issachar,—"*men that had understanding of the times*, to know what Israel ought to do." (1 Chron. xii. 32.) It is well to read God's dealings with yourself. You may have found, by past experience, that He has a special method with you ; that some events bespeak a certain train of providence concerning you ; that certain workings of the Spirit foretel a certain state of soul ; that certain throbs of conscience, ere this, were calls to listen to the Spirit for some especial purpose ; that certain risings in the inner man have told of coming conflict, and fierce temptation, near at hand ; that sudden softenings of heart have been the sure forerunners of contrition—deep, solemn, and refreshing ; that godly yearnings have been but drops before a shower of prayerful influences, long continued. If so,

in this discern "*both time and judgment.*" Let not experience be lost upon you, but make the present profit by the past.

"For he knoweth not that which shall be ; for who can tell him when it shall be ?"—ECCL. VIII. 7.

God's purposes have all their seasons of fulfilment; His judgments, each its time of visitation. Mapped out in clear perspective, thine every dispensation was fixed from everlasting in the eternal mind. Thy sunny seasons, and thy cloudy days; sorrow and pain, anxiety and want, thine every loss of property or friends; all was designed or e'er thou sawest the light. Trials may be in store, the thoughts of which would harrow up thy soul,—so thick that, were thy lifetime like Methuselah's, thy troubles would be more than ordinary men's. All this is seen and known to God: *what* it may be, or *when* it is to come, He tells not to His creatures. As lightning shines,—for *quickness*; as wave comes after wave,—for *frequency*; so may they visit thee. Uncertain as the wind,—yet fixed in purpose, and in performance sure,—anon they come. From day to day, from hour to hour, who can foretel his future? "*Therefore,*" the Preacher says, "*the misery of man is great upon him*" (ver. 6.) Reader, is this thy feeling? Is "*therefore*" misery great on *thee*? Does it make thee brood over possibilities,—alarmed at the contingency of woes? Would'st thou that all were known before, that

thou mightest be prepared for what may come? Rather thank God that He has veiled the future, and deals His dispensations one by one,—the time, the way, the kind, the circumstance, fixed by unerring wisdom, and by boundless love. It is thus God's will is glorified; His power felt; His sovereignty known, Free from the trammels of His creatures' will; matchless in skill; unfailing in resource,—He thus proclaims His Godhead. Known to His children are the ways of God. The world may murmur, but the saints submit. The world may tremble, but the saints are glad. In all their woes a Father's hand they see—a Saviour's sympathy. They would not alter it. They meekly leave the future to their God. The times and seasons; the "*what*;" the "*when*;" the "*how*;" the "*why*;" they would not, dare not, know. *One* thing they know,—that as their days, so their strength shall be; that He, who tells the stars, and calls them by their names, will heal the broken-hearted; He bindeth up their wounds (Deut. xxxiii. 25; Psalm cxlvii. 3); —that comforts shall keep pace with sorrows, and grace suffice for every time of need.

"There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death."—ECCLES. VIII. 8.

Who can explain the facts, detail the laws, or search the wonders, of the world of *spirits*? A portion of that very world dwells in each unit of the human race. Man, now for twice

three thousand years, or nigh, has had to do with it; yet knows as little of it as he did at first. *What* is the *soul* of man? A spirit. *Whence* came it? From the world of spirits. And *whither* goes it? To the world of spirits. That is all *he* knows, and that is small indeed. He can't explain *how* spirit dwells with flesh,—*what* binds the two together, for a time, in perfect unity. He has never *seen*, as little can he *feel*, the links that knit them to each other. It is all *within* him,—his flesh, his spirit, his life, his being,—all the machinery of soul and body, thus closely interlaced. *Yet* is it as foreign to his grasp, as that which happens in another world. *Thus* flesh and spirit dwell together. Who could suppose they e'er would part again! Who can explain *how* soul and body part, or how the links of union are undone—what makes the spirit fly away, or how the flesh gives up its hold! God wills; God does it; God says not *why*; God tells not *how*. He speaks, unheard; straight it is seen and done. Man may detain the body; he cannot stay the soul, nor say, "Thou shalt not go!" God says, "Return!" The word must be obeyed. Nor youth, nor wit, nor beauty, can delay His hand. How wonderful is death! At times how violent! At times how stealthy! At times he takes your darling from your side,—robs you before your face unblushingly. At other times, days, months, and years may intervene before you know it. The spirit fled; you knew it not. You thought it still on earth; but it was gone. You think of him, prepare for him, and write

to him. Alas! the spirit is gone; and hadst thou known it, what couldest thou have done! Oh, vanity of vanities! What pain, what misery, man's sin has brought to pass! And yet how wonderful the ignorance, the recklessness of fallen man! Thrice dead in spiritual death, he neither knows nor seeks a remedy, but binds his misery around him with thoughtless energy. And yet there is a remedy—a remedy in *Jesus*,—a remedy for those who look to *Jesus*,—for those, whose friends are gone to be with *Jesus*. Say, Reader, can you look around you, can you look backward or forward—and be happy, unless you find this remedy for all the misery, uncertainty, and care of this poor, passing world?

“And there is no discharge in that war.”—
ECCL. VIII. 8.

OH, what a *war* it is! On one side all is death; on the other all is victory. Since Adam's day the war is carried on; no respite granted, no peace, no armistice, and no exchange of prisoners. Each moment of the day are thousands slain; each moment of the night. Each one is carried off in turn, but none come back again; *“there is no discharge!”* Some have been prisoners for centuries, and tens of centuries, fast bound in chains of death. *As yet there is no discharge!* Parents have seen their children snatched away; *none have returned* again; wives torn from husbands, husbands from wives, and friends from friends; there

no exception, "*no discharge.*" Oh, death, thou art the conqueror now! Some fear thee; others brave thee (ver. 8, end); still more forget thee; but all alike fall under thee. Thou takest some ere life is scarce begun. Even *them* thou bringest not again; "*there is no discharge!*" Some are removed in bloom of youth—in beauty's prime—in midst of usefulness. Death, art thou not mistaken? Was not thy stroke intended for another? Oh, give them back! Alas! "*there is no discharge!*"—How many a veteran we have seen, "green" in his years! We loved to think how long he still might live. We gave him still, of years, full half-a-score. But no! He is taken; "*there is no discharge!*"—What anguish in the thought, "*He will ne'er return!*" Fancy can hardly take it in. Each "mail" you think to see his well-known "hand." Each opening door seems opened for his form to enter! Alas! "*there is no discharge!*" As YET there is none. But will there *never* be? "There is no discharge!" Death, say not so. *One day* thou'lt see it. As all have gone, all will return: as all have died, so all will live again. Oh, death, thou art doomed. "The lake of fire" is kept for *thee*. (Rev. xx. 14.) Thou art fairly conquered. The wicked even are taken from thy grasp. They rise again,—to misery, it is true; yet *still* they *live*. Oh, death! they are not *thine*. But, those who have died in *faith*!—it is not death; they *sleep* in *Jesus*. They wait the appointed time. Their "change" will come. Their Lord shall

speak, and they will answer. He will not forget them, nor leave them in the dust of death. (Job xiv. 14, 15.) "*Where,*" then, "*thy sting,*" O Death? "*O grave,*" "*where,*" then, "*thy victory!*" O Death, thy war is at an end; not now, but then; and *then*, O Death, "*there is no discharge*" for thee!

"There is a time when one man ruleth over another to his own hurt."—ECCLES. VIII. 9.

AUTHORITY is sweet, but dangerous. Misrule is hurtful, not only to the ruled, but to the ruler. History is full of it; but, Reader, what have you and I, just now, to do with *History*? There is something that concerns us all more nearly. Are you the *Father* of a family? Do you rule them for your profit, or your hurt? Do you mark their tempers, and their dispositions? Are your instructions suited to their characters; your chastenings well adjusted to their sensibilities? In their infirmities see you *your own* reflected? What *they* are now, in youth and childhood such were *you*. Dost thou remember *this*,—that they derive their nature all from *thee*?—Are love and firmness mingled in thy rule: love tempered by discretion, and firmness joined to love? How many parents err,—Christian, well-meaning parents! They forget the Bible rule—the rod they spare. It is meant in love; it is hatred in effect. (Prov. xiii. 24.) *God* rules his sons by chastening. He sends what makes them *feel*, in *mind* and *body* too. Can *you* do better

with your child, than God with *His*? Are children different now? Is the Preacher's discipline grown out of date? In infancy a thousand lectures, loving though they be, fall short of bodily correction, duly administered in season, and degree. It is what the child can *feel* and understand. *This* is the simplest mode of teaching; *this*, the end in view.—If you rule your child in anger, you teach him to be angry in his turn. One day his anger will recoil on *you*. The same with peevishness, and fretful speech; it will only make them fretful with *thyselves*; thou rul'st them to *thy hurt*.—If thou, a parent, deceive thy partner, and thus screen the child, thy child one day will practise fraud on *thee*. Thou rul'st him to *thy hurt*.—Strike not a child in haste. Is he to be chastened? Then go to prayer, that thou be kept from anger, and that God would teach thy child, and nurture him with grace. I knew a father once. I never shall forget his way. He was a tender parent, and keenly felt his children's failings. He never overlooked their faults, but when he chastened them it was done in *love*. I well remember the anguish of his look. He showed his children that it tore his heart to chasten them. Thus, in the father's grief, the children read their faults, and saw how bitter, and how ill it was to disobey.

"There is a time when one man ruleth over another to his own hurt."—ECCL. VIII. 9.

ARE you the *Master* of a household? Do you

rule your *servants* well? What wisdom do you show—what sense of justice, in your family? Do you respect the covenant you made? It was as much implied, that *you* should rule with meekness and forbearance, as that *they* should serve you well. Bear you in mind that they are flesh and blood, as well as you? No difference in this respect betwixt them and thee; feelings to work upon; failings to be studied; affections to be pleased or wounded; all *this* they have in common with thyself. How much is this forgotten in the stern realities of service! Yet God, who made the one, has made the other, too. With Him there is no respect of persons. Will He not mark thy lack of feeling?—Do you choose the season well for *telling them their faults*? How much depends on *this*! How oft we rule them to our injury by neglecting it! If faults come thickly, yet reprove them not in quick succession; they will not bear it, and you will thus defeat your end. *One* fault corrected at a time goes further than twenty told at once. If one reproof be taken meekly, the next may overstrain the patience, and the third produce a storm. On *whom* recoils the blow? *Who* feels it most? The master or the servant? Thou knowest full well.—Let not reproof succeed the fault too quickly. The sense of having erred ruffles the mind. It is then less open to reproof, when fresh from erring. *Forbear a while*. You will find your opportunity. Their hearts, like yours, are in the hand of God. Commit your

cause to Him, and lean not on yourself, your warnings and expostulations.—Does your servant answer you in rudeness? You are justly grieved. This tries the patience, and grates upon the feelings, most severely. “To think that he so far forgets himself! Had an equal thus insulted me, it were more easily endured, but *from a servant*, it is intolerable!” But is not this a cause to bear with him more patiently? Inferior station argues an inferior sensibility—inferior knowledge of what is right, or wrong—coarse or becoming—vulgar or refined. Your station makes you doubly sensitive, while he is tenfold liable to err. Judge of his fault with calmness, remembering yourself, your failings, your advantages. Mayhap you have erred yourself, as he has done. (Eccl. vii. 21, 22.) In any wise, let not his anger anger you, nor tempt you to exceed propriety. It is bad enough in him; it were tenfold worse in *you*.—What do you for the *souls* of those, who serve you? Do you speak to them of *Jesus*, and the world to come? If not, how can you rule them well? Church privilege is good; so is domestic worship; but let not these supplant your faithfulness. Speak to them for yourself,—nought can excuse you; tell them yourself of what concerns their peace.—Servants have *eyes and ears*. They mark your words, observe your ways, and see your inconsistencies. How can you rule them to your profit, if your deeds belie your principles?—Would you make them punctual,

be punctual yourself; example teaches more than precept. With all your care, your patience will be tried; but how much more, if you neglect to rule them well!

"So I saw the wicked buried."—ECCLES. VIII. 10.

OH, what a leveller is *death*! All die, and all are buried; the grave has no respect of persons. Some rest in hope. After their "skin" the worms destroy their body, yet their Redeemer lives; in time they will see Him face to face. (Psalm xvi. 9; Job xix. 25—27.) With other some how *different*! They lived in sin; in sin they died. Their sins lie with them in the dust, and rest upon their bones. (Job xx. 11; Ezek. xxxii. 27.) And yet they seemed to die in peace. Because their face looked pleasantly in death, it is said that all was well. Oh, what a broken reed! Rest not upon it. It will only pierce the hand that leans upon it. Thou, too, may'st have a smile upon thy lifeless corpse. What then? Think'st thou that this will cancel sin, and save thy soul? The only safety is in Jesus and His cross. Nought else will serve thee in a dying day.

And then the *funeral*, with all its circumstance of woe! The sable hearse; the nodding plumes; horses caparisoned with studied care; attendants numerous—some heralding in front, some following;—with *men of high degree*, the escutcheon on the house—the coronet on the bier—the mausolæum cold in its marbled symmetry; with *all* (or high or low) the ser-

vice solemnly performed,—“ashes to ashes,” “dust to dust,” so reverently given! How hard to think that any, thus interred, have failed of heaven! Nature repels the thought. “It cannot be! It were sacrilege to doubt their safety.” Thus man takes refuge from unpleasant truth in dark solemnities; and clothes the trappings of mortality—the crowning emblems of his sin and shame—with thoughts of universal safety. How vain the pomp, how false the pride, oft shown on such occasions! Look at that funeral! You knew him well by sight; you often met him, exchanged a nod, or passing word, or stopped to speak to him. *Then* he passed on, unnoticed, unattended;—no show, or vain display had marked his doings. You see him *now*; at least you see his pageant. More horses draw him to the tomb than he was wont to sit behind, when living. Had you not seen the like before, you would ask what peer, or man of note he was. Thus men are borne as princes to the grave, who, in their life, had nothing princely. It is well to reverence the dead, and solemnly commit them to the tomb; yet not to make it an excuse for vanity. Think what it is to *die*! Think of the great realities that follow. Think of the mouldering *dust*; how little *it* can feel the empty honours thus bestowed upon it! Think of the parted *spirit*; how is it bettered by the pomp and show? Think of the lowly Jesus, and let thy pride be buried in thy brother’s grave.

“*They were forgotten.*”—ECCL. VIII. 10.

How well we knew his person, both in the haunts of business, and the house of prayer! * His place was not “itself” without him. It was a shock to hear that he was gone. It brought him to our mind more forcibly than ever. Slight friendship swelled at once to feelings of intensity. Each seemed as though he had lost an intimate acquaintance. Excitement lingered for a day, or two. Before his burial it seemed to wane; then suddenly shot up again; flared for a little season, and *then*—expired! How soon he was *forgotten*! Even thus it fares with men of great renown—statesmen, “high captains,” or public benefactors. Long as they *lived*, the nation watched their doings. They could not walk abroad, or reach their country seat, but it was read by thousands. What mourning when they *died*! And yet *how soon* were they *forgotten*! Ah! when we hear the sobs of parents suddenly bereft; of widows, orphans, brothers, sisters, friends—disconsolate in woe, we say, can *they* forget! Ah yes, they may and *do*! Like marble fretwork, memory pays tribute to the lapse of time, and parts with all its tracery. Yet it is not *always* so. In *some* memory is made of stronger stuff; the stream of retrospective love flows deep, though silently. Absent from sight, their cherished ones are often in their mind. *We* men of fainter feelings must stand abashed before them, and own them greater than our-

* “*The place of the holy.*” See text.

selves.—*What* makes the difference betwixt *memory* and *memory*; betwixt man and man? *Wherein* consists the framework of the mind? *How* is it put together? *What* makes affection strong, or weak? *What* causes the predominance of judgment, feeling, frailty, or of power? Known unto God are all His works; He has not told us *why*. Man's memory has shared the fate of all that is human; it is now degraded by infirmity, and spoiled by sin! But *this* we know, God *never* forgets His people. Even living *saints* forget departed ones; *Jesus* forgets *them* not. Midst sin and imperfection, they never lose His love, His thought, His care; and when they leave this mortal scene, and fade from human memory, they are not a whit more present to His mind than formerly. *His* memory knows *no change*.

“*Sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily.*”—ECCL. VIII. 11.

“*IN the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” (Gen. ii. 17.) Thus spake the Lord to *Adam*. Yet *Adam* ate, and *Adam* *did not die*. It is true that *moral* death ensued at once, in strict fulfilment—death physical was still delayed. Year followed year, and age succeeded age—yet *Adam* *died not*. Nine centuries had passed—*still* *Adam* *lived*! How slowly judgment came! Yet *Adam* *died at last*. (Gen. v. 5.) With God it was but a day. With Him a thousand years are but as yesterday gone by, or as an evening watch. (Ps.

xc. 4.)—For sixscore years the *flood* descended not; for sixscore years the world defied the sentence; for sixscore years God's patience waited, while the ark was made; yet judgment came *at last*. (Gen. vi. 3; 1 Pet. iii. 20.) Since *then*, all things continue as they were; yet judgment only *tarrys*, it is not gone by. *Christ* says, "*I come again!*" Yet *still* it is said, "*Where* is the promise of His coming?" God's promise is not slack; He suffers long, that men may turn and live. Yet still they scorn His grace; and man is wayward, since the Lord is kind. (2 Pet. iii. 8—9; Rom. ii. 4.)—Of all God's attributes, methinks, *long suffering* is the chief. Infinite sense of evil, with infinite *forbearance*! How wonderful! The mystery of power (Num. xiv. 17, 18), thus set forth, is quite unsearchable by mortal minds. Impatience (and what art thou, my soul, but this!), impatience hides its eyes; it cannot gaze upon the glory of God's *forbearance*.—But *why* is God so patient? Willing to show His wrath, and make His power (*avenging* power) known, *why* does He yet *forbear*? The cause is plain—to show the riches of His glory on the vessels of His grace. (Rom. ix. 22, 23.) *The Book of Life* unfolds the mystery. Traced on its page—written indelibly in truth and love—God reads the chosen names. The time is noted for their birth and calling. The world must last, and judgment tarry, till the last name is called—the family made up—the flock completed.—My soul, how wonderful that God has borne with *thee*! That thou should'st

know His grace! And share his love! His patience thou hast tried—His purpose proved, by manifold transgressions. Say, with *how many* sinners has He borne, that *thou*, the chief of sinners, might become the least of saints? Then hide thy head, and call thyself the chief of sinners *still*.

“*Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, &c.*”—ECCL. VIII. 12, 13.

MEN live and die. They *call* it life and death, and so it is. But yet *this* life and death are purely physical—*breath* dwelling in the man, or *breath* departed. *True* life is something more than this. Its source and centre is in God. It is an emanation from Himself—a streamlet from the fount of self-existence—a radiance from the light of godly being. The life of God is, like Himself, holy, and just, and good. No other life but *this* could God impart. While life retains this character, it is life itself; what it was meant to be; containing in itself the impress of the Holy One, Himself the sole epitome of life. True life infers God's presence and His love; the pure enjoyment of His favour. Peace, holiness, and purity, are but the breath of such existence. God's countenance, and light are but the air it breathes. Without these properties life physical is death, however long it lasts. Long life, in fallen beings, is but a

death prolonged, no mark of blessing or of God's complacency. By heavenly rules, how can a fallen state, a lifeless life—a covert death—be or a blessing or a boon? The only boon it boasts is that the sinner still is spared, if, by God's blessing, he may learn to count his life but death; and know the principle, and taste the power, of life from heaven. Men deem long life a blessing. They hug their days, and count their opportunities of sin; each moment added to their life is hailed with joy, a respite from the future, dreaded and unknown. But *what* is life? It is the prelude to *eternity*—the first beginning of an endless end. *What* is eternity, but time prolonged—the after links of one unbroken chain! Our mortal life, without the heavenly birth, is but the day-spring of eternal death. The life of grace implanted in the soul, is the first breathing of eternal day. Die soon, die late, sure it is well with them, that fear the Lord, who look to Jesus, and revere His name. Die late, die early, *can* it be well with them, who only live to die eternally, because they live *without the Lord*? God give us grace to see aright—to call things by their proper names—and thus to find *death* but the door of *life* and gate of heaven. (See vers. 12, 13.)

“*There be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked.*”—ECCL. VIII. 14.

So it has always been. God chastens whom

He loves. Can love be better shown? To bring us to the Cross, and keep us there; to show the vanity of earthly things, and feed the graces of the saints? Say, Christian sufferer, does thine heart rebel, to see the wicked prosper, and thyself in woe? Say, wouldst thou *change*? Is he better off than thou? Are his earthly blessings better than thy *grace*? What enuiest thou? His health, his wealth, his power of limb, his aptitude for thought, his friends, attendants, equipage, or home? Is *Jesus*, then, unequal to thy wants, unable for thy cares? Are thy miseries, then, greater than thy mercies? Thy comforts, are they *gone*? What think ye of the honour, that *Jesus* makes thy bed in all thy sickness! He knows thy pains; He counts thy waking hours, thy restless nights, thy tossings to and fro. He never leaves thee; He nurses thee with tender care. Is health unsanctified a greater blessing? Sickness with *Jesus*—or health *without* *Jesus*; *which* is the greater boon?—Thy family is thinned by death. What then? Does not the Saviour fill the void? Is *He* not better than father, mother, husband, wife, or friend? Then envy not the circle where death has been unknown. Thou hast better friends and relatives than they.—Perhaps thy means are low, and changed from what they were. But what is *Jesus*? Is he not more than gold and silver? Is He not more to *thee*? Are the ways of God unequal, because He gives thee *Jesus*? Gives thee His grace, His love, His presence; gives thee *Himself* besides?

Hast thou the *lesser* portion, because thou hast the *Lord*? Then how canst thou complain? Complaint would suit the worldling more than thee—that he has only *time*, and thou *eternity*—that he has earth alone, while you inherit *heaven*. Then envy not the rich, the strong, the prosperous; the man who knows no weariness in pleasure from morn to night, from night to morning; thou seest not their hearts; thou knowest not their cares; oftentimes their happiness is nought but restlessness; they love not thought; they *dare not* think; they hurry on, because they *dare not* stop. They know not God, they know not Christ. What is their health,—or what their happiness, to thee!

“*The business that is done on the earth . . . all the work of God.*”—ECCL. VIII. 16, 17.

READER, consider well this passage of the Word. You will find that *both* the clauses of our text are *one* in meaning. “*The work of God!*” What is it? God’s works in heaven.—Angels behold His Majesty. Departed spirits feed upon his glory. In heaven (with reverence I speak) God’s work is simple, uniform in kind, and in degree. It is the maintenance of holiness in sinless beings; the outgoing of His wisdom, love, and power, in one continuous, unresisted stream; glorious in itself, and not less glorious in the glory thus imparted to saints, and angels. But oh, “*the business that is done on the earth!*” “*The work of God*”

the business of his hand in this poor, fallen world!—How great, how intricate, how various!—Think of the workings of His power even in the outward world; the guidance of the seasons, and all the dispensations of the winds and waves; now sent in mercy, now in wrath—or to supply the wants, or chide the failings, of His creatures.—Think of His dealings with the *hearts* of men; the strivings of the Spirit; the calls of Providence; His acting on the conscience in all its prickings, throes, and sensibilities!—Think of the *work of God* in guiding, keeping, chastening, His people; each want considered; each failing studied; grace, comfort, and experience supplied in kind, and season, and degree, fitted to every case; each soul as much the subject of His care, as though the only object of His love. And yet the entire body, the universal Church, maintained in order and relation; all knit together and compact, as if it were a single soul; its government complete; its life secure; its members numbered by unerring love; none to be lost—none to be overlooked—none, for the twinkling of an eye, removed from the heart, or mind of Jesus! Oh! *what* a work it is—the *work of God*! Say, who hath known His mind, or been His counsellor! Who taught Him wisdom, that God should be his debtor! (Rom. xi. 33, 34.) The Preacher tried to find it out, to trace its workings, to mark its purpose, to calculate its doings—but all *in vain*; it baffled all his skill. Even Solomon might study it by night, by day,

(ver. 16), determined to pursue his search : but none, not even Solomon, could find out God, or understand His ways. "Worship Him, all ye gods !"

"No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them."—ECCL. IX. 1.

HE is speaking of "*the righteous and the wise*," of all their circumstances—of all their liabilities to joy or sorrow. "All things come alike to *all*. There is one event to the *righteous* and the *wicked*." (Ver. 2.) God's children know the trials, pains, uncertainties of life, as do the wicked. The saints have no exemption here. "No man, not even the righteous, knoweth *or love or hatred* by all that is before them." *What* would the Preacher mean ! *Whose* love ? *Whose* hatred ? Is it the love of *God* ? *God's* hatred ! God cannot hate His people ; He loves, He hates them not. Are these terms employed as *figures*—love, to denote God's smiling dispensations ; hatred, to mean His bitter things—His chastenings ? Or does it mean *man's* love, and hatred—the "*time* to love, the *time* to hate," as spoken of before ? (Eccl. iii. 8.) God may use man's passions, or affections, to chasten, or to soothe His people. Whiche'er it be, the truth is still the same, "The wise," "the righteous," and "their works, are *in the hand of God*." (Ver. 1.) They purpose oft ; but who can tell if he shall e'er per-

form? Oft they begin, and never end; their works are all attended with uncertainty. God's visitations stop them; man's hatred disappoints them; what they intend for good, oft ends in evil. Their wisest schemes are brought to nothing. Their brightest prospects fade away. They work in darkness. From day to day they know not what the morrow brings—what means may help, what means may thwart them, human or divine. Man may pronounce his trials hatred, and his mercies love. But to the *saints* nothing begins, or ends in hatred, as from God. All ends, as it begins—in *love*. Is *man* the instrument? Yet still they see God working by the hand of man. Man hates; God loves. Man persecutes: God overrules. Man means it all for ill; but God still turns it into good. And thus the same event brings "*love*," and "*hatred*," joined in one. God's love, man's hatred, thus combine to work unfailing good—untiring mercy, for all who love the Lord.

"Madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead."—Eccl. ix. 3.

IN life a madman,—a madman still in death! Such, such is man. It is piteous to hear of one, that is born bereft of reason. It is sad to say, "He passed his life in madness,—then he died!" Oh, what a picture of a waste, physical and moral! Dead as a child, a citizen, a brother, long e'er he died,—the very acmé of all that's desolate. Man thinks he is wise.

He looks with pity on the maniac. How little he suspects that he himself is tenfold mad,—not only mad for time; mad also for eternity! Madness he brings into the world; imbibes it with his mother's milk; learns it at school; confirms and strengthens it in manhood; feeds it by all he does; reads it in books; finds it in every company; bears it along in every walk of life; sleeping or waking—silent or speaking—learned or ignorant—rich or poor—he is but a maniac still. A madman was his father; and so his father's father,—*his* father even again—go backwards till you come to Adam; maniacs were they *all*. So are his *children*; and so will be his children's children, even to the end—*Is* he not mad? What think ye of a man, who backward walks, close on a yawning precipice? *Is* he not mad? Does he not earn the name? And *what* is man? *What* does he? He sports with life; he plays with death; slumbers above the flames of hell; defies his Maker and his Judge; thinks nought of judgment and eternity; and *thus* he *dies*! Is it a libel, then, to say, "*He is mad?*" And what comes *after* death? Comes wisdom *then*? Even then will madness *cease*? *What* wisdom can there be? "Death and destruction say we have *heard* the *fame* thereof." (Job xxviii. 22.) They *hear* it, but they *have* it *not*. Man then discovers how mad he has been. He sees his madness then, only to know its endless misery. Happy the man who, coming "to himself," resolves once more to seek his Father's house! (Luke xv. 17, 18.) Yes, "*coming to himself.*" Thus speaks

the parable. I pray you mark the words; they are full of meaning. As though the man had been asleep; or drunk; or mad; or yet had swooned away—unconscious of himself, and all around him. And then, touched by a sudden hand, and sense as suddenly infused, he wakes—*comes to himself* again, and straight he lives, another man. And such is fallen nature; and such is *grace* in its effects. Happy the man, who thus recovers the gift of reason! Happy the man, who sits at Jesus' feet, "*in his right mind,*" and clothed with grace—cured of his madness. Jesus has said the word. The "legion" is cast and gone. The man is a maniac no more. (Luke viii. 35.) Reader, either you are *mad*, or *once* you were. Say, have you looked to Jesus, or are you a madman *still*?

"*A living dog is better than a dead lion.*"—

ECCL. IX. 4.

THE Preacher's figure is homely; yet how true! The lion *was* a lion, while he *lived*,—king of the forests, first of all the beasts. But now he is *dead*, *what* is he? The *name* of lion, and no more. A living dog is better. Such as he was, such is he *still*—to all intents and purposes, a *dog*! What dog would like to change? And so, a living *beggar* is better than a dead *king*. Some few would rather die a king than live a beggar. Yet, in the main, man clings to life, and would rather live a beggar, than die a king. But if life be valued for the present

time, much more may it be valued for the world to come. The Preacher gives a *reason* why humble *life* may be preferred to stately *death*. "The living *know* that they shall *die*." (Ver. 5.) Were man but wise,—did he but know the boon, and rightly prize the lengthening of his days, how happy would he be! The dead! *What* can he do? Death is no longer future,—death is come. *What* can he do? Can he prepare for death? The time is past, and preparation gone. Look at him in his "narrow bed!" Say, can he now *repent*? To *Jesus* can he look? Can he for *mercy* cry? What boots his rank, his velvet coffin, and his stately tomb,—his lofty pedigree, and worldwide fame? Died he in unbelief,—say, who would envy him? Who would praise him *then*? (Ver. 5.) No grace in store; no mercy to be found; no prayer to make; no Word of God to read; no promise to be had; hope, hopelessly, for ever, at an end! How wretched!—How precious, then, *to live*,—in pain, or poverty, or woe! The living still, through grace, may look to Jesus; trust in His cross for righteousness; may "*turn and live*." Life *to the last*, is precious,—oh, *how* precious!—if haply grace be found, and pardon sealed! Better (but, oh! how dangerous the state)—better (with reverence I speak it, but in truth)—better to be a *living* profligate, a murderer, a thief, than be a Pharisee in *death*. For *those* there is hope; for *him* there is none. *These* yet may cry, "O Lord, remember me. Remember not my sins. Remember, Lord, thy grace. Remember Jesus

and His blood ! " *These* yet may " turn and live." But, oh ! the man that *died* a *Pharisee* ! Self-righteousness lies with him in the grave. (Job xx. 11.) *Who*, now, can make him " turn and live ? "

" *God now accepteth thy works.*"—Eccl. ix. 7.

THY works must be " the work of *God*," ere God accept them ; works done in faith and prayer, from love to Jesus ; works wrought in thee by God the Spirit ; works done, not to *procure* salvation, but because salvation is *given*. No other works than these can God accept. Faith lies beneath, and glory crowns, them all. " *What* shall we do, that we might work the *works of God* ? " The Saviour thus replied, " That ye *believe* on Him whom He hath sent." (John vi. 28, 29.) Works, built on this foundation, find grace with God for Jesus' sake. Happy the man that trusts in *Jesus*,—that makes the work of Christ his only hope ! His meanest works are then approved ; God looks upon them and accepts them all. It is not the ministers of God alone, nor they who live for works of charity. All have not time for this ; their calling lies another way. Be it the labour of the spade or plough ; the toil of cities, or the work of mines ; to serve a counter, or to lift a bale ; the driest labour of the head or hands,—in *all* may God be glorified, and God be *found*. For *this* the Preacher bids us "*go*" our "*way*;" to "*eat*" our "*bread* with joy," and "*drink*" our "*wine*" with "*merry heart*." (Ver. 7.) He

says that God "*accepts*" these works. A blessing rests upon the board, where Christ is owned, and God is sought; where meat is taken, not for eating's sake, but that the heart be cheered, and members nourished, that God be served more heartily; where thankfulness is felt, even for the *relish* of our food, reflecting, as it does, His goodness. "*Thy works are now accepted.*" It is not the building of a hospital, nor church endowed; nor yet the catalogue of rich bequests to this or that "*foundation*;" nor yet, again, the largess to supply the wants of thousands. All this may still be done, and not accepted if it be not done in faith. (1 Cor. xiii. 3.) "*The praying sweep,*" who sings his carol at the chimney-top—or the poor believer, who picks his oakum at the workhouse-door—is more accepted in his work than they. From morn to night, from night to morning—eating or working, walking or at rest—the man is blessed, who lives on Jesus. Thrice blessed even the servant's servant, if he serve the Lord.

"Let thy garments be always white, and anoint thy head with ointment."—ECCL. IX. 8.

"*TIDINESS next to godliness,*" they say. The saying is good; for cleanliness becomes the heirs of glory. It was never meant that Christians should be *slovens*. Uncleanliness is want of principle, and argues an ill-ordered mind,—as tho' the man had neither taste, nor talent, to be cleanly. It is a flaw in one's consistency to be a sloven. The dress neglected—the person

badly kept—the broken furniture—the unswept floor,—even worldly taste forbids. Shall Christian principle do less, and come behind in matters of propriety? Some men are slovenly by nature; it is hard to cure—but grace does *all* things. And, Christian reader, if this be *thine* infirmity, I prithee think it not beneath thee to try and cure it. Even *here* the *Spirit's* help is needed, more than in greater matters, since here you are tempted to rely on *self*. Deep-seated habits, of whatever kind, are only cured by watching unto prayer.—Some men are slovens from neglect; habits of study make them careless; their eye is fixed on its abstractions, and overlooks the foreground of reality. This is a morbid state.—Others are slovenly on *principle*, as monks and hermits; and men of God at times confound neglect of person with contempt for finery.—Some men are slovens, and that *unwittingly*. They think and dream, and read and pray,—their minds absorbed in heaven; they forget they still are denizens of earth; they see not what is seen by others, and noted to the prejudice of grace. Forgive me, Reader,—the coat unbrushed, the hair dishevelled, and unwashed hands,—can these be fruits of righteousness, or marks of grace? Oh, no. Much may be learned from Moses' law—the Gospel of *Leviticus*. How carefully is cleanliness enforced, and all uncleanness awfully condemned! And *why*? The one, the type of *holiness*, the last, the type of *sin*. *We* have the types enforced by *Christ* Himself. Shall we be more remiss than they? Oh, keep

before thee the countless multitude so bright and fair! (Rev. vii. 9.) Think of their robes so white. Think of the fountain opened for all uncleanness (Zech. xiii. 1),—the blood of Jesus. Art thou a true believer, that blood has cleansed thy soul as well as theirs? Then let its virtue straight be seen upon thy person; its power reflected even in thine house, and raiment,—that so God's name be glorified, and that none should say thy practice, and thy principles are at variance. Consistency is never to be despised. Wouldst thou not be a sloven in thy soul, then be no sloven in thine outward man.

“Live joyfully with the wife of thy bosom all the days of thy vanity.”—ECCLES. IX. 9.

DAYS of *vanity* are days of *care*. Man's days are days of vanity; thus man requires an *help meet*. God's works are wonderful; rich in design, variety, and power. Woman is part of man,—bone of his bone; flesh of his flesh; in nature one; partner of all his frailties; partaker of his passions; in heart and mind his counterpart,—and yet how *different*! From infancy another creature; her sphere of life—her objects and pursuits—her tone of mind—her mode of action—her taste, her energies, her garb, her person—cast in another mould. *Whence* comes the difference? *How* is the mind prepared, congenial to the sex? *How* is the body framed in unison? *How* is it brought to pass that the

creature to be born ^{is} man, or woman? But *why* the difference? That man might have an *help meet*,—something so different from himself, that it should be a help, from dint of contrast. But who can tell what woman is to man? Who can explain the nature of her influence—to soothe, to modify, to bear his troubles—to smooth his roughness—to lessen all his cares?—“*Live joyfully*,” the Preacher says. Live meekly with her; live tenderly; live peaceably. Love her, and cherish her, as Christ the Church. (Eph. v. 29.) “*That is thy portion*” (ver. 9),—a fragment of true happiness, that survived the fall. That is thy *privilege*—thy *duty*; not less a privilege to love and cherish, than to possess the boon. You lose “the portion,” when you lose the joy; you lose the joy, when you despise the blessing.—The Preacher tells of *many* wonders. (Prov. xxx. 18—31.) Methinks that he forgot the *chiefest* of them *all*,—how *woman bears with man*; forgives his injuries; endures his violence; overlooks his failings; requites him good for evil. How oft his contradiction turns joy to sorrow! And yet “the weaker vessel” is strong to bear,—stronger than the strongest of the stronger sex.—“*Live with her “joyfully!”*” Oh, child of God, live meekly, tenderly! The more you honour *her*, the more you honour *self*; the more you cherish *her*, the more you love *yourself*; the more you bear with her for Jesus’ sake, the more you have fellowship with God in Christ. *His* glory, dignity, and office, is to love His *bride*, the

Church. Thy glory is to imitate thy Lord. May grace, then, go before, and set you in His steps! (Ps. lxxxv. 13.)

“*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.*”—ECCLES. IX. 10.

DUTIES are *duties*. Painful or pleasant—trifling or great—public or obscure—duties are *duties still*. In things indifferent a choice is left; in *duties* there is *none*. The rule is, “do it *with thy might*.” Who should be niggardly of time, or strength, when God presents a duty to be done? How *numberless* are duties! Masters and servants; parents and children; buyers and sellers; friend and friend; in all the round of daily work, and mutual dependance, *all* have their *duties*.—To do them with our “*might*” means not the hurry of excitement, or of noisy diligence; but to act with steady calmness, and a quiet purpose, as serving God; to perform each family, and household, duty, not as a task, with grudging mind—but cheerfully. The most menial duty, thus performed, will give a freshness to our work, and acts of service, that nothing else will give.—How needful this refreshment to cheer our daily toil,—to see, and find the Lord in every duty,—and thus to do it with our *might*.—Say, ye who serve the counter, or who, in other ways, are used the livelong day to bear the whims, to please the taste, to answer the demands, of all who come—need ye not something to relieve the mind, to cheer the heart, and turn your trouble into rest? Do

you ever snatch a moment, midst your many calls, to lift your heart to Jesus, to purge your sins, to give you strength, to sanctify your toil ; and then forthwith renew your energy, add zeal to patience, and do your duty with your "might?"—The Preacher speaks of what we "*find* to do," as though of something that may meet us *unexpectedly*. The rule is still the *same*. You are interrupted when you wish it not,—some other thing to do, than what you wished. Whatsoever it may be, do it with thy *might*. It is Jesus that sends the interruption ; He who appoints the task ; receive it graciously, and do it heartily. The *Lord* is in it,—you will *find* Him in it, if you seek Him there.—Some visitor comes in. Maybe you wish him not—but yet, receive him with your "might." Could he have come, if God had not appointed him ? Then speak not to him, as though your time were lost, and every moment were an hour, that he is with you—but seek to improve the time. It is your business for the present ; then do it well—and thus you will glorify the God, who sent it, more than in all the zeal of what you *meant* to do.—No duty should be done with half a heart, or half a hand. Let not the heart be absent while the hand is at work. All that is worth doing, is worth doing *well*. A hurried way, even in a trifle, will neither help you, nor bring a blessing with it. You cannot hurry, and think of God the while. Then seek the way of working quietly, with sober diligence, and peaceful energy ; and thus, whate'er you do, you will "*do it*" with your "*might*."

“There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.”—
ECCL. IX. 10.

OH it is a solemn thought—death cuts thy course in twain. On one side all is time, on the other is eternity. Things for eternity are done in present time; and things of time must now be done, or *never*. Thou canst not take with thee duties undone, to do them there; *here* they must stay behind, *for ever* to remain *undone*!—Is it to save thy *soul*? Make no delays. Jesus the *Saviour* is *here*. Jesus the *Judge* is *there*. *Here* you may seek and find; you cannot find Him *there*. *Here* sin is washed away; sin meets with vengeance *there*.—Is it to speak of Christ to some poor wandering soul? As far as *you* are concerned, it may be *now*, or *never*. Be faithful while you may.—Is it to do some work of charity—some act of kindness? Is it to act the peacemaker? Perhaps you are the only one to do it, the only one of influence to bring discordant souls together. If you neglect to do it, death may come; the precious moment is lost; and lasting discord may proclaim your broken purpose.—Or you may have in mind to benefit a friend, to make a present from your substance; something that you may give, yet cannot “will away.” *Make no delays*. What canst thou do “in the grave, whither thou goest?” Have you a “will” to make—a “will” to alter? *Delay it not*. The mind is averse to it. A shudder seizes you, when called to do it. Flesh

shrinks from what is to be when self is gone. The world is a blank to self—a gulph of unreality, when self, even in prospect, is no longer there. You think you are bringing death before the time; ringing the knell of your departure. Let not such thoughts as these deter you. Will death come sooner because you make your “will?” If death at last overtake you unawares, when power is gone, and sense fast ebbs away; oh what a pang may seize you, to think that wife or child is unprovided for, through your *delay*! It is true you leave them to a Father’s care, and, trusting in His providence, you pray that your neglect be overruled in mercy; yet it must be a real pain—a strange sensation—to know what glory is thine, and yet to feel a *pang*—that forward all is bright, while backwards hangs a cloud—a cloud of sad uncertainty. Faith mounts on eagles’ wings, superior to the seeming threats of “time and chance;” yet faith, at times, may be ashamed to act, and blush to own a libel on her character.”

“*Time and chance happeneth to them all.*”—ECCL.
IX. 11.

TIME, and her handmaid “*Chance*”—in other word’s *God’s providence*, clad in the vesture of uncertainty. God’s ways bespeak His wisdom and His power; wise to adapt, and mighty to fulfil. Viewed with the eye of sense, they oft assume an air of fickleness; by which it is inferred that all things happen without rhyme,

or reason—no settled law pervading, no sovereign will directing, their occurrence. Thus man invades the attributes of God, and robs Him of His honour—as though some mock divinity presided over us, and made caprice his rule of action.—Man's wants are various, and require a treatment ever varying. Hence the varieties of "*time and chance*;" not one event occurs without its meaning. It is fitted to correct, to humble, or encourage; to fill the mind with thoughts of God; to show man's utter weakness to keep himself, or guard against the future; in fine to make him say, "It is the Lord; His hand; His power; His will."—Such treatment is required for a fallen race. No law of certainty would suit the purpose. Shivered to atoms by the "fall," all order is gone from man. Each broken fragment of his nature reflects prismatic rays of frailty—their hue, their colour, their intensity, for ever varying; each calling for a providence adapted to its need; and, as the prism varies, so is the treatment changed.—The eye that counts the feathers on the insects' wings; that numbers up the blades of grass; that counts the drops of water in the ocean; and registers each grain of sand upon the shore—is quick to see, and swift to send. Hence all the changes, accidents, and "*chances*," of man's experience. Hence nor "*race*" is "to the *swift*, nor *battle* to the *strong*," nor *bread*, nor *wealth*, "nor *favour*," to human wisdom, "*skill*" or "*understanding*." (Ver. 11.) Man may propose; all the disposing is of God. God's "*chance*" is not

the "chance" of *men*—all fickle and confused. God's "chance" is *sure*; fixed in its principle; certain in its aim; acting on rules of wisdom, inscrutable to man, yet clear and well-defined. Man fails, he knows not *why*. He calculates in vain. His mines are crossed by counter-mines—the underworkings of the Hand, that made the worlds; of Him, who is greater in the little things of "*time and chance*," than when He loosens "Orion's" bands—binds "the sweet influences of Pleiades"—brings forth "Mazza-roth in his season"—or guides "Arcturus, and his sons." (Job xxxviii. 31, 32.)

"Yet no man remembered that same poor man."—

ECCL. IX. 14—16.

IF man is grateful for thy services, be *thankful*. If he is ungrateful, be thankful *still*. In serving man for Jesus' sake; thou servest God; *He* will be thankful, if man is *not*—thy service is not lost. The Christian has a remedy for all—a touchstone, that turns all to gold. Coldness he finds, where he expected love; ingratitude, where he looked for thankfulness. But still there is warmth, and gratitude, and love, in *Jesus*—more than He looked for at the hand of man. And thus there *always* is a heart to feel thy kindness, though man should heartless be.—None of thy good intentions come to nought. If man receive them not, they find a welcome, and a home, with *Jesus*. He counts them up; He writes them in his book—and most of all, thy service for the souls of men.

Some scoff. Some listen for a time. Some promise well, and *then* they fall away. Even *then* thy labour is not lost. God's Word returns not to Him void. (Isa. lv. 11.) It carries back the savour of thy faithfulness. "The travail of his soul" the Saviour sees. For *those* you meant it—He takes it to *Himself*, and counts Himself your debtor. Nay, the most trifling act of kindness—be it to fetch a pitcher from the well; to lend a "lift" in harvest time; to take your turn to watch a restless child; the hand stretched forth to steady tottering steps, be it in crowded thoroughfare, in public "carriages"—or yet when no one is there to see your courtesy; a word, even though unheeded, to a passer-by,—it falls not to the ground. The word, unheard by man, is heard by *Jesus*. The act may be forgotten; Jesus forgets it *not*. Men may refuse to serve you in their turn—yet heed it not. It is wounding to the heart. You looked for better things. But can you wonder? *What* is the heart of man? Did you *expect* to find it *thankful*? Well, it often is so—but as often the reverse. Then fret not at ingratitude. Thy brother's heart is hard, and so is *thine*; only thou show'st it in some other way.—Let all your deeds be done as unto *God*. In what you do for others, see *first* your duty to the Lord. Even in *these*, let duty to your neighbour be the *second* thing. So shall you never miss your aim, nor find yourself requited with unthankfulness.

“ *The words of wise men heard in quiet.* ”—
ECC. IX. 17.

SPEAK *quietly*, if forcibly you wish to speak. It is not the strength of lungs, that makes impression, but the power of soul. This speaks the most, not in the “ fire ” of rapid utterance ; not in the storm of passionate expression ; nor yet the “ earthquake ” of ecstatic violence—but in the “ still small voice ” of *quiet* speech. (1 Kings xix. 11, 12.) *Loudness* bespeaks a want of tenderness—a lack of sentiment. Deep-seated feeling loves it not. It keeps its secrets for thy softer words.—It is fine to hear a sudden check of oratory ; a lull of utterance ; the manner changed ; the gestures captive led. The words come quietly, as from the world of feeling—even from the bottom of the soul—and all is *hushed*. The assembly hang upon the lips of quietness—the pathos of tranquillity.—In “ company,” *quiet* implies good breeding in grace, a chastened mind. He, that is much with *Jesus*, is not loud. *His* presence charms the soul to quietness, and makes it taste the power of that world, where all is rest.—If you are loud, you cannot hear the *Spirit*. He ever speaks in quiet—and in quietness He is heard.—Passion is loud—and so is want of thought. Self-discipline, retirement, and prayer beget a softer manner, and a chastened tongue. He that is loud of speech, hears most of *self*. It is odious to hear the sound of thoughtless *self*—to catch it off its guard, giving its vent to carnal feeling in all the coarseness of its nature.

It is humbling to the soul—and *yet*, if others hear, *you* had better hear it too, that you may know your real character, and thus be quick to learn the gentleness of Christ.—Be *quiet* when you speak of *Jesus*—when you invite the sinner to His cross. You cannot unfold His love with violence of speech. You *must* be quiet, or love will hold its tongue.—Be *quiet* when you minister *rebuks*, or tell another of his failings. If you are loud, you cannot reach his heart. The quieter you are, the louder in effect; the more serene, the more persuasive. When loudness lives, persuasion dies.—Then, let your words be “*heard in quiet.*” On *principle* speak quietly. Your gentleness will edify your soul, and thus return its grace with usury.—Study to speak *distinctly*, that your *whisper* may be heard, and thus your *power of quietness* enlarged—yet not the affectation of a maudlin gentleness—but the sterling quiet of the mind of Christ.

“*Wisdom is better than weapons of war.*”—ECCLES.
IX. 18.

WISDOM is better than war, but harder to be had. *This* comes of nature; *that* only comes of *grace*. It is easier to slay your thousands than to have one spark of wisdom—Peace is a jewel: all honour to the men, who preach it—who travel hundreds of miles upon their peaceful errand; and find access to kings and emperors, to speak to them of *peace*! Men scoff—but God approves their mission. Th-

failure lies, not in the goodness of their cause, but in the sin of man. Yet it is a day-dream, after all, to think that men will hear of *reason*; the reason of the sanctuary; the reason of the Prince of Peace! Man is quite unable, or to receive, or practise *reason*. Even if he promise, will that ensure performance? Or will it change his heart? He is but a sinner still—brother to him, who shed his brother's blood. (Gen. iv.) Give him—ah! give him, *if you can*, the mind of Jesus. Give him new feelings and affections. Make him, in short, a child of God; and *then* he will understand you. Till *then* the world will fight, and fight again. Wars will not cease till Christ return, and fill the world with peace.—“Give them an arbiter,” it is said, “let *him* decide it!” An arbiter is found. Can *he*, then, change the heart, or bring the nations to their senses? Reason is nought; expostulation nothing better; entreaty, eloquence, and truth, of no avail. Sin masters everything but God. Sin says, “We will fight it out; the sword is the arbiter of right!” The scabbard is flung away, and *war begins!*—Alas! for wisdom; it finds no place to rest its foot upon; it hovers over the battlefield—then hides its head and weeps.—Surely the world is out of course, all its foundations gone. What is it but a *ruin*, after all;—“*Wisdom is better than weapons of war.*” There is *other* war, besides the conflict of the sword—the war of words, and angry passions—of social discord—of family dissension—or courts of law. For each, and all; the only remedy is *wisdom*; wisdom

to love—wisdom to suffer—wisdom to forbear—wisdom to be dumb—to treat your brother kindly—to overcome his evil with your good. You thus disarm him; fairly conquer him; heap coals of fire on his head. *What* weapons are like *these*, found in the armoury of Jesus—kept sharp, and furbished by the Spirit—for the child of God?

“Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour.”—Eccl. x. 1.

FLIES are but *little* things—and yet they do a world of mischief. Themselves corruptible, they breed corruption, as the Preacher's figure shows. Oft is the odour of fair fame turned to “a stinking savour,” because the flies of inconsistency have festered in it.—Flies are but *flitting* things; they are now on *me*, and now on *you*. Scare them—they are quickly gone; as quickly they return: be ready then, to scare them off again. Let them but *settle* for a while—they will sip and sip again—till drowsy with their feast, they die—*then* follows putrefaction; your sweets are spoiled, and *whom* have you to thank? None but yourself. Had you but seen the *lid* were *on*, or locked your sweetmeats *by*, no thief had stolen, no spoiler tainted, them. The fault was, then, thine own.—Thus *inconsistencies* are flitting things. At first a single act, that hardly settles—then hums its flight away. Act follow—

act, at short, and shorter intervals. Then acts are turned to *habits*. And habits nestle in the soul, and poison it. Had you but checked the act, the habit had not come.—Be wary, then, and scare the “*flies*” away. Though scores invade you, say, *what are flies to you, a living man?* Tease you they may, but cannot settle long *without your leave*. And *what* are Satan’s *flies*—temptations by the score—when met by grace? *Resist* them, and they soon will fly away. (Is. iv. 7).—What a fair thing the Christian’s name—his good report with others! How hardly earned! How lightly spoiled! How delicate its substance! The faintest breath is seen upon its mirrored face. The smallest “fly” is enough to taint it. Guard well thy character, my brother! Keep it from taint, not for thine own, but for thy Master’s sake. A trifling act—a thoughtless word—how soon it brings thee down, and makes thine ointment to send forth a stinking savour! Even Christian men are often creatures of impression. Once their opinion turns, it is hard to turn again; and years of piety will be forgotten through *one* “unsavory” act. Things present blot the *past* from mortal eyes. Then have thy “*present*” fair—that men may see it, and give God the praise.

“*The wise man’s heart is at his right hand.*”—

ECCOL. x. 2.

A CHRISTIAN’S heart is the treasury of grace (Matt. xii. 35), not *in* itself, nor *of* itself—but in

the *Spirit*. The *heart* is thus the centre of affection—the seat of knowledge—the source of purpose, and emotion—the very soul of spiritual life. It is with the *heart* we feel and think; believe on Christ; and thus receive all doctrinal impression. (Rom. x. 10.) It is from the treasure of the “*heart*” we bring all practical experience—all spiritual fruit—all holy feelings—all edifying speech, and all consistency of life. The *heart* is the abode of memory, and holy recollections—the *Spirit* bringing them to mind, with power to act upon them. In fine, the *heart* contains all the resources of the child of God, drawn from the fountain of God’s grace and truth.—To keep the heart with diligence,—to use its powers of thought, and means of action—to exercise our graces with discretion—to have our knowledge at our fingers’ ends, our feelings within call—to keep our sensibilities awake, and thus to draw them forth, when needed,—*this* is the part of *wisdom*; *this* is what the Preacher means.—A workman knows the odds between his “*right hand*,” and his *left*; and seeks to have his implements at hand, that he *at once* may grasp, and handle them, with all *dexterity*.—It is *thus* the Christian is called to use his powers,—to have them at the *right hand* of his energy.—It is humbling to meet the enemy, unarmed and unprepared; to lose the victory for lack of grace; to have known the art to conquer, and *yet*, from carelessness, to lose it; to hear, what else might edify, and be no better for it; to

have occasion to speak a word, and yet find nought to say; to try to mention what we have heard, and find it gone from mind—and why? Our heart is at our *left* hand, not our right; and *hence* our failure. 'The Spirit's sword not kept within our reach; our knowledge suffered to escape, for want of practice; the grace of hearing, feeling, speaking, not to be found, since not in exercise;—*all this* is clumsy workmanship, and bespeaks a heart ill-kept. We seek our weapons, and, when the time is gone by, mayhap we find them, too late to use them, *but* not too late to cause the blush of shame.—A friend says "*Pray for me!*" Your heart gives no response,—no prayer is found! How chilling to the soul! How humbling! To have your sympathy desired, and find no feeling there, as though you had no heart to beat within you! To have to weep with them that weep, and find no tears to weep with, as though the very fount were dried and gone! Oh, if we lived more prayerfully, and sat more constantly at Jesus' feet, would it be thus? Would it be thus *so often*? My soul, be careful. Let thine heart at thy right hand be ever found!

"*Yielding pacifieth great offences.*"—

ECCL. x. 4.

YIELDING makes peace with God. We learn it from the *Parable*. (Luke xv.) A *prophet* says the same. (Isaiah lv. 7.) In *Job* we find it too; in *David* and in *Jonah*. (Job xxxiii. 27; .

Psalm xxxii.; Jonah iii.) Man's heart is *proud*, and therefore man is *lost*. "*Hide pride* from man," and man is *saved*. (Job xxxiii. 17.) Then to God's righteousness he *stoops*, and God is *pacified*. (Rom. x. 3.) Only acknowledge that thy sin is great,—that under every tree thou hast idols sought,—and God is *pacified*. (Jer. iii. 13.)—How say you, *yielding* does it? Is not *Christ* our peace? (Eph. ii. 14.) His blood alone can *pacify*, and reconcile to God." It is true, my friend. Christ does it all. The work is *His*; not yours, nor mine. But art thou *willing* to accept His work? That is the question. Pride stumbles at the cross. It stoops not to a bleeding *Saviour*, more than it stoops to *God*. Pride, in its "dignity," overtops the highest angels. *They* hide the *face*,—pride turns its *back* on God Himself.—Yes; "*yielding pacifies*;" but even this is not *thy* doing. It is not *man* that yields; man gives not way, and never will. It is *grace* that does it,—man's heart *made willing* in the day of power. (Psalm cx. 3.) To *grace* man is a debtor *still*.—Even for Christian souls it is difficult to yield. "*To yield!*" It is right, I know; it will pacify my friend; nor rest, nor peace I find, until I yield,—until I learn of Jesus. But *then*, to say, "I am sorry!" To *own* that I am wrong! *This* is an *effort*.—You try again, "Is there no other way? Can I not keep my pride, and be at peace?" You try to *pray*. You cannot. Why? You have not owned your fault. Pride still is there. Go, say, "I am wrong"—go

pacify your *friend*, and be at peace with *God*.—Who can explain the twofold nature of the saint,—that mystery of good and evil! Now sin is uppermost, now grace; the old man, and the new, ever at deadly strife. Grace gains the day—but *how*? Why gained it not before? And *why* at last—The heart held out. *Why* held it out so long? *What* made resistance possible? *What* brought it to an end?—But hush, my soul! Thou canst not solve such mysteries as these. Enough to know thyself a miracle of sin; thy God, a miracle of grace. Be it thy part to follow Jesus—to learn of Him, to yield to God, and man—and be at peace.

“*Wisdom is profitable to direct.*”—

ECCL. x. 10.

“Does God take care” for digging *pits*, or felling *trees*? Is it not written for *our sakes* (vers. 8, 9; 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10); that each might know his calling, and learn to fill it with propriety,—that all might strive to be expert in what they have to do? God’s name is honoured when we thus adorn His doctrine, and show that Christian men can work expertly.—How fitting, then, to know our calling!—first, to discover what we are called to do; and *then*, to do it with our might.—Some call themselves *to preach the Gospel*; Christ called them not. It is proved, both by their doctrine, and their lives. None but the Spirit “calls” in truth; and when He calls, He gives the “*wisdom*,”

needful "*to direct.*" How can a man direct his ways? How walk in holiness and power? How wield the Gospel weapons, or use the Gospel tools? How lead the sinner in the paths of peace—if wisdom guide him not?—It is the same in other walks of life—in "law," and medicine, or philosophy; with merchants, tradesmen, or mechanics; with labourers, or household servants. It is right that *all* should know their work, and do it *well*.—All are not equally expert—but all may work with diligence; and, if they are the Lord's, may ask for *grace* to sanctify their powers, and thus enable them to use them well.—Such shall have good report of "them that are without." (1 Tim. iii. 7.) Man honours those, who do their best—and owns the difference between those who waste their powers, and them who make the most of what they have. It was said by one well known for piety, that if a saint were but a "shoe-black," his shoes should be the brightest in the town. And this should be the rule with all,—whether to plane a lath, or scrub a floor; to steer a vessel, or to plough a field,—whate'er the labour of the head or hand,—that *all* should try to do their labour *well*.—The household sempstress! Now-a-days, what endless handiworks! What divers forms, materials, and hues! What shall we say? How hard at times to draw the line between usefulness, and fashion; between what is solid, and what is vain! *This* we may say (gravely, yet courteously),—all that you do, do *well*; but still be careful *what* you do—lest haply it be said, "*What doest thou?*"

Lest *Jesus* say, "You worked for fashion, to deck the chamber, or to please the eye; you did not work for *Me*."

"*A babbler is no better.*"—EccL. x. 11.

OH what a comfort to have a *friend*, a confidant,—a man who knows to keep a secret,—whose ear is ready to receive, whose heart is able to retain, whatever may be told him,—a man, who can resist the charm of telling what he knows, and keep it within the bolts and bars of secrecy! It is a foul blot upon one's honour, *to tell a secret*; to bring another into trouble, *because you could not hold your tongue*.—How *mean* it makes one feel, to have it said, "*Why did you tell it?*" Nor is it merely when it is *told* you as a *secret*. Your friend has spoken in your presence of things that touch his honour, or the fame of others. He *said not*, "Do not mention it!" He rested on your character. He said, "He will not repeat it. I know I am safe. He is not given to talk." He gave you credit for discretion, and found himself *mistaken*!—Oh, who can tell the harm that is done by breach of confidence! Who can follow, in its course, a secret thus let loose! One tells it to another, and thus it goes from mouth to mouth—from ear to ear—depositing in many hearts what never should be known; gathering, as it flies, untold excess of scandal.—If itching *ears* are bad, sure itching *lips* are worse—more hurtful in the end. And *yet* it is sweet to fallen nature, to be the *first*

to guess—the *first* to know—the first to *tell*! It is a strange pleasure, after all,—a sorry way of feeding self-importance,—that for a time (oh, short-lived pleasure!) you be admired as the mouth-piece of “intelligence!” It is nought but vanity. I pray thee, mortify the taste; discountenance the habit. Be not ambitious of the honour.—Even where the matter is harmless, let others tell the tale, for fear you pride yourself on having told it. Oh, it is a sign that grace is low, when pleasure such as *this* is coveted, and souls are taken with the charm of “*telling*.”—Where “character” is at stake, and what you hear concerns the faults of others, it is well to bury it *at once* in secrecy,—not to repeat it to a living soul. Practise the habit; in the end you will find it pleasant; and *then*, it will cost you more to tell, than to suppress, it.—Of all the things we hear, *how few* are worth repeating! Weigh it before you mention it. You will mostly find it is not worth the breath expended on it; far less will it repay the risk of injuring yourself or others. Shun, then, the approach of evil. Hate e’en the garment spotted by the flesh. (Jude 28.) And keep thy lips from learning babblers’ ways.

“*The lips of a fool will swallow up himself.*”—
ECCL. x. 12.

A WORLD of evil is in the *tongue*. Though but a little member, yet it boasts great things. It sets on fire the course of nature. No wonder,

—itself is set on fire of hell. (James iii. 5, 6.) By *words* we are justified, and by our *words* condemned. The idle *words* will do it, without the actions. The idle *words* will seal the sinner's doom. (Matt. xii. 36, 37.) Words of impatience, violence, and wrath—words of disdainful tempers—expose a man to hell, (Matt. v. 21, 22.) But it is not violence alone. It is all the character—the entire man. *Words* testify of this, as plainly as weathercocks declare the wind that blows. Of the abundance of the heart the lips will speak.—Some lips speak nought but vanity. The wanton oath—the ribald jest—the idle scoff: these savour of the “pit” too plainly. And then, the empty talk—the tittering words—vain exclamations—breath wasted on unmeaning nothings! God is not in all their *words*, because He is not in all their *thoughts*.—Oh, what a reckoning with idle lips at last! To have talked of everything but God—of all but Jesus! If *e'er* those names were uttered, it was in lightness, or unmeaning prayer. Say, is not *this* enough to seal our condemnation? My soul, bless God. It is of his grace alone if thou escape the charge,—not of thyself. “Lo, *this* has touched thy lips; thy sin is purged.” (Isaiah vi. 7.) Such words the Prophet heard; such words were said to *thee*, or thou wert guilty still.—How many a man seems to have wisdom, till he *speaks*! His looks are “taking;” his manners good—his speech proclaims him other than he seems. His *lips* have *swallowed up himself*! What silence did, his words have now

undone. He *had* a character; it *was*, and *is not*. How much a Christian reputation depends on what is *spoken*! How oft *a word* in private has undone the effect of public teaching,—a moment's vanity destroyed the work of years; How oft the profit of an interview been lost through want of gravity!—Say, Reader, have *thy* lips ne'er *swallowed up thyself*, nor marred thine influence, through some unguarded word! It is bitter thus to eat the bread of self-humiliation, and see how vain, how passing vain, we are! Then pray the Lord to set a watch before thy mouth; to guard the entrance of thy lips; lest, otherwise, they be a sepulchre, to “swallow up” thyself and others too. (Psalm cxli. 3.)

“*Because he knoweth not how to go to the city.*”—

ECCL. x. 15.

MOST men would seek “*the city*,” in a way—the City of the Lord, the New Jerusalem. Few like to say they seek it *not*; for this were to confess they are on their way to hell.—Some trouble not themselves to find it. They think they are sure to reach it; they know not how. “God is merciful!” they say; and there the matter ends. “How barbarous to think it otherwise!” They think that all men fall asleep on earth, and wake in heaven. Such take it easily. How many such there be!—Others make much ado. Much pains they take to seek “*the city*.” Pity they know not how to find it! They fast; say many prayers; early and late you see them at the shrine of vain observances. Their dress.

their hair, their whole appearance, show that they are eaten up with "forms," which *loudly* say, "We seek *the City*;" but which as clearly prove they know not how to find it.—Some take the *Pharisaic* road, and think it leads to heaven. They pride themselves upon their works, and strict integrity of life. Alas! when death removes the bandage from their eyes, they will find they are in Samaria's midst, and not in Zion, as they thought. (2 Kings vi. 20.)—Others say plainly that they cannot find "*the city*." They ask the road of every one they meet, "Say, friend, will *faith*, or *works*, lead me to Zion's hill?" *This* path they tread, now *that*—taking each by-way, as it comes; but still with importunity they cry, "We have not found the road!"—Some, strange to say! walk *backwards* to "*the city*," or, at least, they *try* to walk. They *say* they seek it, but their face is turned the other way; they have the *world* in view. Say, can they find the city *thus*?—But *some* there are, who walk the narrow road,—the *only* road, that leads to Zion. Once *they* were wanderers too. But Jesus met them as they strayed. "*I am the way*," He said, "and I alone. None cometh to" *the City* "but by Me." (John xiv. 6.) And now, through grace, they follow *Jesus*. Both road, and guide, He is; His work, the only causeway for their feet; His footprints ever telling that He is in the way, going before them *to Jerusalem*,—not, as He did before, to death and shame; but, through His finished work, leading them to glory, even to "*the City*" now prepared. (Mark x. 32;

Heb. xi. 16.) Blessed are they that do His will, and have a right to enter through the gates into the New Jerusalem. There shall they see His face; there shall they serve Him. No sun "*the city*" needs, nor moon to light it. *This* is the name by which it is called, "*The Lord is there.*" (Rev. xxii.; Ezek. xlvi. 35.)

"*By much slothfulness the building decayeth.*"—

ECCL. X. 18.

BEWARE of idleness—and, most of all, avoid the thief, *procrastination*, and his counterpart, "*to-morrow.*" Look sharp—or else they are sure to pilfer your time, your substance, and your character. Why should you say, "*to-morrow,*" when "*to-day*" is better? The rent is seen—the flaw is acknowledged; you *mean* to have it done. "It is but a *stitch*," you say; "only a brick is gone!" Yes, friend, it was but one, but *now* it is three or four; and will be twenty, if you mend it not. The less the pains required, the less excuse. It is morning now; "you will do it in the afternoon." Night, in its darkness, sees it is not done; so patent is thy negligence! The *morrow* comes; another and another. I prithee, Friend, say not that word again.

How hard it is to be consistent! to carry out one's principles; to work them out in trifles—in things of every day's occurrence! Yet character is made up of this, and that—*small* things of character, as well as great. And what, I ask thee, is *consistency*, but to do all things in

time, in order, and in place?—Habits are always worth correcting. Things outward speak of that which is *within*. If you defer to stop a gap, or mend a hole, most probably you do the same with faults and failings. The principle is the same in either case. The eye that scans the one, discerns the other. One mind affords the energy—one heart supplies the courage—to correct the fault; it is the same face, that *ought* to blush for slovenly delay.—Then strive to be exact, for conscience' sake. *Who* says, "*Where* is the cause? *Why* so particular?" The matter is great. *Consistency* is at stake. It is time to be particular.—Beware of *small delays*. Know you not that *little* foxes spoil the vines; and vines have tender grapes? (Cant. ii. 15.) "*Young lions*" have "*great teeth*." Then break them out *at once*. They will be greater by and by, and do a world of injury. (Psalm lviii. 6.) *One* fault allowed—*one* evil way unchecked—passion indulged in—temper not subdued; oh, *who* can tell what trouble they will cause thee afterwards! If duly summoned at the first assault, the garrison will soon give in. The more delay, the harder it will be to take the fortress. *Rust* is a little thing at first—but how corroding! How easily contracted! A slight exposure does it. Thus slothfulness creeps on by small degrees, and soon corrodes the vitals of one's energy.

“ *A bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.*”—
ECCL. X. 20.

'Tis dangerous to *speake*, where secrecy is required. The thought is thine own, the while you keep it to yourself. But *once* the cage is opened, and the bird let loose—who knows how far its flight may bear it? At first you think to tie it by the foot—you tell your secret to a *single* friend. *He* tells it to another, who mentions it but to a *chosen few*! The cord is loosened—*then* it is slipped. Your “bird” no more will roost in secrecy.—*What* makes you tell your secret? The itch of *telling*. And can you wonder that *others* feel the like, and love to gratify the taste, which you could not restrain?—Then learn to keep your secret to yourself. It is snug to know the “bird” is in the cage, securely fastened. And, though it flutter against the bars, desiring its liberty, *still* keep it close. It will do no harm, while *there*. What mischief it might do, let loose, you know not.—If you think evil of a man, what need to *mention* it? His faults are known to thee, but *why* repeat them? *Who* has a right to ask it? God suffered thee to know them, that thou mightst *pray* for him—and not to harm thyself and others, by spreading his dishonour.

It is dangerous to *think*! Thought oozes out at *tiny* openings! A look betrays it. A word in sleep may speak it; unguarded speech unfold it.—It is dangerous to *think*! Thoughts

have their way, if once you harbour them—and do their best to gain the surface. What is wrong to speak, it is oft as wrong to think. Who made thee judge thy brother's character? Who gave his failings to thy care, or bid thee turn them in thy mind? *Pray* for him, if you will; the more, the better. Think what God's grace may do for him. Think of his turning to the Lord. Think of his sitting at the feet of Jesus. *Such* thoughts are safe; they will do no injury either to him, or thee. But, if you harbour thoughts against *the man*, and not against *the sin*, most probably the thought will "*out*," and injure you.—To keep a thought at bay—how curiously deep—how deeply curious, the exercise! To treat your mind as though it were another's; your thoughts, as though they ne'er belonged to you; to give them strangers' fare, and keep them at respectful distance! All this is possible. It is *often* done by them, whose sense is exercised to sever good from evil. My soul, this exercise be *thine*! that so thy thoughts be captive led, and Jesus rule thy tongue. So nothing shall escape thee, that thou shouldst retain, nor others' character be injured at thine hand.

"*Cast thy bread upon the waters.*" — ECCLES. XI. 1.

BREAD cast upon the waters! It floats away from thee; and, in so doing, floats down the stream to *others*. Thy loss is others' gain,

if *loss* it can be called, that brings thee back a certain recompense. Thy bread—the *very* bread—thou findest not. They, who receive it, give it not again. But what thou givest, thou givest it to God. He will repay thee,—in kind, if need be. And, if not in kind, He will give thee what is better—the Bread of *heaven*, in lieu of earthly bread. But it is needful to give in *faith*, for faithless gifts are nought with God. “To *seven* give a portion; yea, to *eight*.” (Ver. 2.) God loves the cheerful giver. He likes to see His bounty reflected back in thine. And if in faith thou give, thou givest it, not merely for the sake of others, but thine own. “Thou knowest not *what evil*” there “shall be upon the earth” (ver. 2),—what need to have thy gifts repaid with interest. If gifts thou gave not, *where*, then, the interest? If none be due, will interest be given? It is blessed *thus* to give,—to look beyond the act of giving, and even beyond thy brother's need; to take thy walk amidst the attributes of God, reflected, as they are, in God's *commands*; to lose thy vision 'mid “the lasting hills”—the hills of promise; to catch a somewhat of the mind of God; by faith to grasp God's possibilities; to see the principles, on which He acts; to trust Him, as thou wouldst trust a *man*. Yes, fellow-sinner, what a libel upon thee and me! The libel is true; it is not false,—to trust *Jehovah* as we would trust a *man*! This is the way to give, and give *indeed*. This is the way to wing thy soul with energy. Ah! what we want is *tenderness* of heart! We give not, if

we feel not, or we give not cheerfully. Clouds must be full, ere clouds be emptied. (Ver. 3.) The coffers may be full, and yet the heart be empty. Thy coffer must be poured into thine heart, before thy heart can give. As is thine heart, thy hand will be. Say not, "I feel, but yet I give not!" Hast thou the means to give, a giftless feeling is nought. But if thou feel, and yet have nought to give, thy giftless feeling is a gift indeed. Reader, God give His grace to thee and me, to give with cheerfulness, yet *not without discretion*; to see who needs our bounty, and who needs it not; to rise superior to sense and flesh, and act upon the principles of heaven!

"Thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit."

—ECC. XI. 5.

How acts the *Spirit*? Tell me, if you can—how He renews, and acts upon, the soul; how He accompanies the spoken Word; now takes the soul by violence, now wins it unawares. Why one is called in infancy, another called in age! Why either was made willing to receive the call!

You speak of Jesus eloquently. Each soul attentive seems. Your words are hung upon. Lo! tears are shed. Say, *why* is no impression made? The *Spirit* acted not. Oh, tell me *why*!—Again, you speak unaptly, and constrained. Your thoughts come slowly—your words are slower still. "Sure, *no* impression is made *to-day*." But lo! the *Spirit*

moves upon the waters,—souls are renewed and saved. Oh, tell me *why*! Why wrought the Spirit *here*? Why wrought He nothing *there*?—You find your opportunity,—so choice, so good. All things combine to favour you. No obstacle impedes; no interruption comes. You say your “say,” and all is heard most willingly. No frown disheartened you. No temper thwarted you. No time could fitter be—and yet the Spirit breathed not, worked not. Oh, tell me *why*!—Another stemmed the tide of cross events. All things seemed contrary; the time ill-chosen, the circumstance untoward; and yet the Spirit worked,—the Spirit entered; His work was felt. Oh, tell me *why*!—*One* comes, *invited* to receive the Truth. You pray, you reason, you exhort—intreat. The Spirit comes not, breathes not. Nought is done. Oh, tell me *why*!—You wish *another* gone. He is there against your will. He stays, he listens; he receives the Truth. The Spirit enters. The man is born again. Oh, tell me *why*!—God tells thee not. He tells it not to *me*. But *this* we gather from the Spirit’s work,—that He is Sovereign in all He does,—works *when*, and *where*, He will. Thus, in the morn, He bids us “sow” our “seed,” and “in the evening” not “withhold” our “hand.” (Ver 6.) Our duty is to speak,—at all times to be instant. It is all we have to do, and all we *can*. *Regard not*, then, the clouds. *Observe thou not the winds*. (Ver. 4.) Times adverse, or times favouring, are nought

to thee. If eloquence could do it—persuasion, aptitude, or delicate contrivance; then, *this* might favour, *that* might hinder, thee. But as it nought depends on what you do or say, but simply on the Spirit's will and power, what can you do but work in faith—speak in simplicity—and leave results to Him, who worketh all in all?—Be not surprised when speaking takes effect, nor say, “Who would have thought it!” This is to grieve the Spirit.—Be not disheartened, if speaking comes to nought. The Spirit wrought not. What is that to *thee*; art thou responsible? Canst thou command His time, and tell Him *when* to act? Then give Him honour still. His is the honour when He works; He is still honourable when He worketh not. To Him be all the honour given!

“*In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.*”—ECCL. XI. 3.

SAY, Reader,—it is a thought of deep solemnity—*where* shalt thou be this time *five hundred years*? Hast thou ever looked it in the face? If not, thou well mayst shudder. Five hundred years will pass away, and find thee still in being—more keenly sensible than now, to joy, or sorrow. *Not here*, it is true; but elsewhere.

Ah, Reader, tell me *where*—this time *five thousand years*—where shalt thou be?

This time *five million* years? This time *five hundred million*? This time *five thousand million*? This time *five hundred thousand million*? This time *five million times a million* years, *where*, Reader, wilt thou be? Ah, tell me *how you die*; then I will tell you *where* you will be. One simple fact will fix the knotty point, and mark your state for ever.—One simple question I would ask thee, *Believest thou in Jesus*? To fall asleep in Jesus, is to awake in glory. Be this thy portion, millions of years shall pass away,—yea, countless millions,—and find thee *still* amidst the throng of saints and angels; *still* find thee gazing on the face of Jesus—thy soul *still* bathed in glory.—To die in *sin*; in other words, to die without an interest in *Jesus*, were to awake in endless misery,—in death unceasing,—“the second death;” ranging, in woe unspeakable, through all eternity.—*One* moment fixes thee for ever—the hour of *death*. No change can happen after death. *What* change can happen *then*? Can flames of hell burn out thy sins? Say, does the potter’s fire burn *out* the colours of the potter’s vase? Nay, but it burns them *in*, and fixes them indelibly. Thus acts the quenchless flames on sinners and their sins.—Or, will the company of devils, and the wicked dead, *renew* thy soul, and make it meet for heaven? Oh, tell me, if thou can, *how many* years of fire will purify thy soul; *how many* years with Satan restore thee to God’s image? Have you not read it? “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.”

(Rev. xxii. 11.) Can *Purgatory* stand against the truth? Believe it not, my Friend. You will rue it, if you do. If, as a tree, you fall toward south, or north, *there* shall you be *for ever*. "On the sides of the *North*," there lies the eternal city, New Jerusalem, the City of the King. (Psalm xlviii. 2.) Fall there; *there* shalt thou *ever* be. Fall *south-ward*, what hand can then remove thee, or make thee a vessel meet for the Master's use? (2 Tim. ii. 21.)

"*The days of darkness.*"—ECCL. XI. 8.

WHAT a mysterious thing is *darkness*! Who can explain its power? I am still the same in darkness, as in light: in mind, and body, and estate, the same. All things around maintain their relative position, uninfluenced by night, or day. *What* makes the difference of *feeling*?—The horror of great *darkness*! (Gen. xv. 12.) *What* is it? *Whence* does it proceed? The day was made for wakefulness; the night for sleep. Darkness was never made for waking eyes, or waking thoughts. Grace softens it, and robs it of its gloom; but even then, "truly the light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing" to see "the sun." (Ver. 7.) Darkness, and sorrow are congenial things: darkness and *misery*.—"The *days of darkness*!" What are they? Days of distress; "darkness that may be *felt*" (Exodus x. 21); days, in which it is *felt* that man is fallen; in which the sunshine

of prosperity is gone, and man no longer dreams of happiness unbroken.—With *some* how brief the day! How passing short the dream! How soon “*the days of darkness*” come! Their childhood is ushered in with clouds; sickness or sorrow tends them all their days; and soon they set in darkness, as they rose. With *others*, oh, how different! They hardly know what “darkness” means. They *hear* of sorrow, pain, and trouble; *that* is all. They little think that “days of darkness” will at last be *theirs*.—“*The days of darkness!*” Yes, they will *come*. “They shall be *many*.” Oh, *how* many they will be! Thou knowest not what worlds of sorrow are compressed within the nutshell of a moment! When once the bubble bursts, and days of health are gone,—when death and judgment stare thee in the face,—who can express the world of darkness that a few short months may prove? To think of talents wasted! Of God neglected! Of opportunities gone by! Conscience alarmed! The judgment now convinced! The mind unhinged by fear! The body tottering to its fall! Backwards, a dreary waste,—forwards, a yawning void! Death, judgment, and eternity, harrowing the soul! Say, are *these* not “*days of darkness?*” Will not a *few* suffice thee, when they come? Not even a few you would *ask*; but God may *give* thee many. If such be life,—life, and its darkness, the inner darkness!—Oh, what is death? Death and *its* darkness! The *outer* darkness! (Matt. viii. 12.) Oh, for the light of life to cheer thee now,—to cheer thee after death! Oh, for the

Lord, the Christ—Jesus, the Sinner's Friend !
Oh, for the Bright and Morning Star, to
light thee now and ever ! (Rev. xxii. 16.)

" Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth," &c.—
ECCL. XI. 9, 10.

MANKIND is a mystery—God overruling, ordering, directing; *yet* man as free to act, as though none overruled; as bold of heart, as though responsible to none. How clearly this is seen in *youth* ! What lawless vanity ! What free indulgence ! What passionate excess ! What thoughtless unconcern ! What elasticity ! What vast exuberance of health and spirits ! Restless in pleasure—eager to enjoy—no weariness in following out its ways. It is sin grown young again in each succeeding race ; passion renewed, to flow in younger veins ; as though pleasure increased with each succeeding age ; as though the fire of centuries burned in the bosom of existing youth.—Youth is a mystery ! It is early days with man—the mind susceptible ; prejudice unconfirmed ; habits not yet matured ; the feelings tender ; the judgment pliable. You would think it were easy to conduct the man to truth and godliness ; and *yet*, with all this pliability, exists the force concentrated of human passion—the veriest intensity of all that is vain—the wildest day dream of all that is earthly.—Poor youth ! I pity thee. Launched on the billows of a treacherous sea—a traitor world without—a traitor heart within ; pleasures to meet thy passions—snares made to

catch thy failings—all smiles around invitingly. It seems almost a *duty* to enjoy thyself, and take thy swing of all that pleases thee.—*Conscience*, where dwellest thou in youth? There art thou *ever* heard? Say, art thou fairly gone, or plead'st thou still? Can thy voice be heard in the midst of rampant vanity? False manliness would choke thine utterance—the force of vital power put thee down. Yet art thou felt at times. Thou may'st be dormant, yet thou art not dead.—Listen, my youthful friend! Hearest thou not? *What* voice is it? Look not *without*, the voice is from *within*. It bids thee pause and think. It tells thee of a God, a providence, a Judge. It tells thee thou art mortal. It tells thee of a world to come. It says, "Thou art a sinner." Says it not, "Thou need'st a Saviour?" Ah! says it not, "A Saviour may be sought—a Saviour *found*; sin be confessed, and sin *forgiven*?" Says not the voice, "Beware!" Then listen to the voice, my friend.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."—ECCL. XII. 1.

REMEMBER thy Creator! He speaks as if thou hadst *known* Him, and—*forgotten*. But is it so? Ah no! By nature thou knowest Him not. *Forgetfulness* was *born* in thee—forgetfulness of God. Thine the forgetfulness of utter ignorance—of darkness *tenfold* dark, because to thee invisible. Thou art *born* a prodigal—

far from thy first forefather's Father's home. Take, then, his wanderings to *thyself*. Appropriate his sin, and say, "I will return, because my father strayed. I will straight *remember* all that *he forgot*."—God deals with Adam's children, as He dealt with Adam's self; speaks to *thy* fallen nature as He spoke to *his*. His nature is *thine*, as though he fell but *yesterday*. God says to *thee*, as He would say to *him*, "*Remember!* Trace back thy wandering steps. Undo thy past forgetfulness. Return to holiness. Return to God." *But* how canst *thou remember?* Thy *memory* is gone. Search all the corners of thy heart and brain—thou wilt not find it. They will tell thee that *many* things have lodged in them, but God's remembrance *never*. Ah, try, and try again! You will find I am right.—Are you in unbelief? You never knew the Lord. Then *how* remember whom you have never known?—*What* is to be done? Why, what would *Adam* say? He would say, "Restore me what I have lost! Give me, O God, give me my *memory* again! Give me my thoughts of thee! Give me my knowledge of the truth! Restore my soul! Lead me in paths of righteousness for thy name's sake!" (Ps. xxiii.) Take with thee words, my friend. (Hos. xiv. 2.) Take *Adam's* words, and make them *thine*. *God* must remember *thee*, ere thou remember *Him*—give thee His grace—and pardon all thy sins. Then shalt thou track thy way to Adam's sin, and say, "This sin is mine! In Adam I have sinned; forgotten my *redemption* from God. In all his fallen

race I have been a rebel, and a wanderer *still!*" But hark! my friend. What Adam lost, the second Adam found. What Adam took away, the second has given again. Am I the Lord's? In Adam fell I—in Christ I am risen again. In Adam I forgot—in Christ my memory came again. In Adam I am in darkness—in Jesus I have light. *Now I remember! Now I live!* And by the grace of God I will ne'er forget again. Reader, this grace—this light—this memory be thine! If thine it be already, thank God that it is thine. If not, ask God to give it thee. He will not refuse thy prayer.

" *While the evil days come not.*"—ECCL. XII. 1.

"REMEMBER thy Creator *now!*" It may be now, or *never*. What wait you for, my friend? Is life so sure? Your soul so little worth? Is time more precious than eternity? *What* wait you for? The time of sickness and the hour of death! Believe me, Friend, these are not times for thought. Tell me, do *trifling* ailments aid, or let, thy thinking powers? Think ye that *graver* malady will help thee more—the aching head—the burning skin—the throbbing pulse—the sleepless night—the jaded powers? Why wait you, then, for *these!*—Wait you for *later years*, to *sober* you? Be not deceived. Age changes not the heart. It sobers not the mind. It severs not the cords, that bind you to the world. These shrink, 'tis true. They lose their elasticity. But *then* it is only shrink-

ing into *harder* stuff. Age only deadens—it quickens not, the soul. What deadens it to pleasure, will deaden it to *thought*.—Why turn you from the truth? Because the *effort* is greater than you like to make. If youthful powers shun the task, think you that age will find it lighter! “*The evil days!*” When all the powers are “*ossified*” with use; when mental energy begins to flag; when eyes refuse to see, and ears to listen. The limbs no longer bear you to the house of prayer. You cared not for your soul in youth and strength. It may be, when you are old, no man will care for *you*—think of your soul—or come to visit you.—*These* are the evil days. Why wait you, then, for *these*? Is it too soon to look to Jesus? Too soon to love the Lord! *When* mean you to begin? “*To-morrow*,” say you? Next week? Next month? Next year?—My Friend, what can the *coffin* do—the *shroud*—the *grave-yard*—or the *tomb*? Say, can the lifeless corpse—the scattered bones—the mouldering dust—can *these* remember their Creator? Can they turn and live? Oh these are evil days *indeed!* Wait you for *these*, my Friend? Whether, or not, thou wait'st for them, *they* wait for *thee!*—Remember thy Creator *now!* Oh seek for grace to find Him—to remember Him.—*What* wait'st thou for? To find a better Saviour, or a kinder Friend? Haste thee; oh, haste! While we are speaking, time is hastening on. The evil days are *coming*. Oh parley not with sin. Away with vain

excuses—with unbelieving doubts. God says, “Remember thy Creator now.” Then tarry not, my friend.

“Nor the clouds return after rain.”—ECCL. XII. 2.

SAY what are *tears*? Anatomists can solve the question in their way, and give a reason. Still, *what* are tears! *What* makes them flow? *What* keeps the reservoir supplied? *What* keeps it *flowing*? How acts the soul upon the body? *Why* does emotion make me *weep*? What link is there between my *feeling*, and my tears? *Why* weep for *joy*? *Why* weep for *sorrow* too? Ask them who weep the most; the fountain of whose tears is seldom dry. *They* cannot tell. Within them dwells a mystery they cannot solve.—This world is a *vale* of tears. Within its bed there rolls a constant stream of lamentation, mourning, and of woe. How many a streamlet feeds it in its course! Deep furrowed channels bear their burden down. Since Adam's day they have run and ceased not, and all humanity has fed the stream.—Yet it is a wonder, seeing *what* man is, that man should weep so *little*, after all; that intervals should be so *long* between his clouds, and rain; that man should have his *sunny* days; his summer time, when tears are seldom known.—It is of God's mercy, thus to mitigate the curse; and give a little respite to our tears. Sorrow is often sanctified. Yet, of itself, it softens not. Like rain, that oft descends upon a spot, it hardens. Sorr

unnerves the mind, and thus disables it for action. The more it comes, the more it tells with deadening effect. Thus pressure follows pressure—and the spring recovers not its elasticity. As age advances, causes of woe increase,—friends taken, one by one—leaving the soul more desolate. *Infirmities* increase—painful infirmities—oft, of themselves, the source of tears, and rendering the man less able to endure his *other* sorrows.—Thus weakness, desolation, pain—and *strange forebodings of the world to come*—harass the aged mind. Cloud follows cloud across their sky; one shower is scarcely gone, before another comes. The mind—unnerved and full of discontent—rejects all comfort, or for life, or death. These are the *evil days*! Oh, *wait not* for them! Pray that thy early tears be sanctified, that later tears may be restrained. *One* only remedy there is for sin—*one* only antidote to sorrow—THE CROSS OF CHRIST. Shed *there* thy tears for *sin*; He will wipe away thy tears of *sorrow*. There tears of penitence are turned to tears of *joy*—and all thy tears are written in his book. (Psa. lvi. 8.)

“*And all the daughters of music shall be brought low.*”—ECCLES. XII. 4.

“DAUGHTERS of music!” *Once* they were there in power—his soul the very seat of melody. How fine his taste! How exquisite his skill! What rare perception of sweet sounds! Alas! how changed! And yet the *soul* of music is

there—only its *power* is gone. The man remembers what was *in* him; but cannot give it utterance. He lives on days gone by, on days *for ever* gone. New melody is nought to *him*. New melody—the progeny of modern days, the taste of *younger* souls. No ear is left to take it in. The echo of the *past* is there, and fills his languid soul.—The sons of *painting* once were there, and filled his mind with imagery. Science, accomplishment, and art, were *his*, and cast their shadows on him *still*; while energies, gone by, play with a flickering flame, and light his drooping sensibilities.—His *eye*—that window of the soul—how keen it was! What floods of light it once admitted; filling the inward parts with rare perceptions; feeding the thoughts; making the soul aware of what was passing; giving to outward things an inward place, and habitation; the man thus kept in intercourse with all material things.—The soul looked *out*, as well as light looked *in*—and spoke unutterable things. But *now* the medium is thickened, glazed, and seared. Light enters scantily, and leaves its information lagging far behind. If aught is felt, it is but vacancy—the sense that *once* it had been otherwise—grasping what once was there, and finding nought.—The *hearing*—once so fine—hears now the knell of its departure, and strains what *once* was power—but *now* is power no more.—A soul, thus furnished with a fleshly frame was fed (how passing strange!) and kept in action—by material food, by meat and drink, and other carnal things. No meat, no strength

—no energy of soul or body.—*Within the house* the food was bruised, and ground. The “*grinders*” did their work in harmony with all the structure. But *now* the workshop is bare—the mill well nigh forsaken. As once it told of power, so now it tells of power lost, and *gone*.—Behold, my friend, what once may be *thy* portrait! Say, are these *evil days*, or not? The days to seek, the days to *find*, a Saviour? Oh, trust them not. Themselves are eloquent, and say, “Beware!”—If learning, taste, and eloquence, be thine, can they be lost by giving them to God? Can genius be *dishonoured* at the shrine of Him, who gave it? And *yet*, left to themselves, what will thine elegance—thy taste—thy genius do? They cannot rescue thee from pining age. How can they rescue thee from wrath to come?

“*The grasshopper shall be a burden.*”—ECCL. XII. 5.

ALAS, how changed! Is *that* the man, who smiled at danger; who stood the battle's brunt, and faced a multitude alone? Is *that* the man, whose spirit bore him over the stormy wave; whose brawny arm, and stedfast heart set trouble at defiance? Say, *what* has changed him? Nought but the *lapse of years*!—But *what* is changed? The *spirit* is still the *same*. No age affects the *soul*—it knows of no decay; and yet the *body* knows no *fear*, anxiety, or care. It is the *soul*, that feels these things. Not for itself it feels them, but for its fleshly home. It shrinks; it quivers;

sighs and starts—in sympathetic tune; sustains the burdens; fears the fears; mourns with the sorrows of the flesh. Such are the workings of our fallen nature, and such their influence on the soul. Yet none can look within, and trace the process—how boldness turns to fear—rashness to caution—the power of enterprise, to love of rest.—*Rest* is the luxury of age—sweet, soothing rest—as much a luxury to age, as enterprise to youth. But say, *what* works the change? How strange that vital energy should thus decay! How comes it that vigour grows—lives but a short maturity—and then decays! *How* were the seeds of living dissolution thus planted in the frame? How twined, in dormant properties, with fallen nature?—“*The grasshopper is a burden!*” Its very chirp a trouble! Its “spring”—the subject of alarm! Its shadow terrifies the soul!—These are *the evil days*, when sad decay is the burden of the song—when man feels boneless—bloodless—lifeless; when all his pith is gone—his frame a chaos of infirmity; his steps—his breath—his powers—his vision—all bathed in impotency—and weakness seems to start from every pore; when man could cry for very weariness, nought but the ghost of what he was before! He dreams of days gone by, uncertain which is true, the past, or present. The past is a *spectre*—the present nothing more. The *future!* Ah! the future! Is that a spectre too? It must be so—airy in prospect (but in reality how fearfully substantial!), unless the soul has found the sure realities of faith, and

grace—built on the solid rock of Truth. Thus born again, the soul retains its freshness—and though it feels the bodily decay, and pays its tribute to the “fall,” it has a *principle* within—a principle of life—and endless youth; a principle that soars o’er mind, and flesh alike—preserves from fear, and puling fretfulness, and new creates the man.

“*Man goeth to his long home.*”—ECCL. XII. 5.

“*His long,*” but not his final *home*,—there is *another* home beyond. For *some* this home is long indeed—yea passing long. To *some* it has been a home more than five thousand years—as with righteous Abel. *What* earthly tenement can boast a like duration?—Others have tenanted the home for *centuries*. How long their lease will last is known to no man.—How many have *we* seen borne to this “*home!*” Others will see *us* carried to our home. Reader, they will see both thee, and me, except the Lord return in our day: And, if that home receive us, *who* knows how long it will detain us? It may be but an hour, a day, a month, a year. For aught we know (I speak of *possibilities*), it may be twice as long as Adam now has filled it. Known unto God are times and seasons. Can we do more than leave them in His hand? Can we do better than *love* to have it so?—At present all is secret. In due time it shall be known to men and angels.—My Friend, *you* have a home beyond, and so have *I*,—a home prepared and furnished. (John xiv. 2; Matt.

xxv. 34 ; comp. Matt. xxv. 41.) Do you look beyond the country church-yard, and the peaceful sod? You *call* it peaceful. But *what peace* for *you*, if this be all your expectation?—Yes, there is a “home” for *all*—a *final* home. *Once* there, you are there *for ever*. Tell me, my Friend, before we part, *what* home do *you* expect to share? Has it ever crossed your mind, or formed the subject of your serious thought? Christ has prepared a place for them that love Him. Say, will your home be *there*?—*Another* home is prepared. You know its name. Oh! will your home be *there*?—You say, “*Who* knows?” Hearken, and I will tell you. Where is your *present* home? Are you at home with *Jesus*? Do you ever lean your head upon His breast by faith and prayer? Say, are your brightest moments spent with *Jesus*? Is He your confidant, your choicest *Friend*? If so, *He will* be your home for ever. In *Him* you will live. In *Him* you will rest. In *Him* you will sing your song of glory. Perhaps you say, “Oh! this I *wish* to do; my heart desires to lean upon Him, to find Him all my treasure and my home, though still I mourn my unbelief—my fears.” Fear not, my Friend! Jesus despises not your small beginnings; He will be your home at last. But if you are *not* at home with Jesus, nor seek to be so—*what* home have you, my Friend? What home even *now*? What home to look for? Then *you* are homeless here—and, for all the comfort of your final home, better be homeless still for ever!

"Or ever the silver cord be loosed."—ECC. XII. 6.

AND was this wondrous building made, just to be taken down? These members knit together, only to be dismembered? These organs tuned, only to be disorganised? The *spinal* frame, with all its silver power—the force that moves, the pillar that sustains, the man—the centre of sensation!—The *head*, so rich with golden influences; the seat of thought; the throne of intellect; the habitation of the brain,—that mystery, which none has understood nor yet explained; the *bowl*, that is filled with golden wine—the essential fluid of all mental action!—The *heart*, with all its vessels, now full, now void; sending its life, with hydrostatic force, to each extremity; suffusing all with warmth, and circulating, as it flows, with healthful energy!—The *lungs*, with turning "*wheel*," now lowering their bucket to the well of ether, now raising it again; supplying breath, and vigour to the frame; sweeping the inner chambers with wondrous ventilation; discharging all that's foul—inhaling all that is pure! Must *these* be broken up? Must all their beauty fade? Must all their power cease? Their very life be turned to death?—*Why* is man's frame thus fading? *Why* lurks within it the essence of decay? Because of *sin*.—But does this undo the mystery? It was not so corruptible at first. Man lived nine centuries and more; his frame decayed not—his organs ceased not—till his course was run. And *now*, for ages, the time

has been but *threescore years and ten*, neither increasing nor diminishing. *Why* is it *thus*,—so long before, and now so short? And why not shorter still? *God wills it so*. He has fixed the term of strength, the period of decay. They wax, and wane, obedient to His will.—It seems a mystery why such contrivance should be lost, and perish thus. Each day—each hour—each moment, thousands of souls depart—and leave thousands of wrecks behind; each body thus deserted, even in life's lowest dregs, formed of such exquisite machinery, as none but God could make. But *lost* it is not—far from lost. Had Adam's race produced one saint alone, it were not lost. Man's withering frame has been the nursery of *countless* saints. Their faith, their grace, experience, and hope, first found them in a fallen world. *Jesus* they had not known, nor glory seen, had they not dwelled at first in *earthen vessels*. Yet more,—the house is taken down, but to be built again—to last, to be inhabited, *for ever*! Oh, happy they, who have “an house, not built with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Cor. v. 1.)

“*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was.*”—

ECCL. XII. 7.

Dust shall be dust *once more*. Not dust in living flesh—but simply *dust* again, just as it was before. The *spirit* shall return to *God*—to God, who gave it; to God, who breathed it into man at first. Thus spirit goes to spirit, and dust returns to dust—creation's work

done, to all appearance, as though it had not been; the union disunited; the harmony made harmony more. Dust claims its dust, and spirit claims its spirit. The two were made to dwell together; but sin has sundered them, and, for a time, impressed on each a separate existence. God gathers to Himself man's spirit and his breath (Job xxxiv. 14); yet not to absorb the spirit in Himself,—not that the soul should lose itself in God, as dust returns to dust. Spirit, once severed from the Master Spirit, must ever retain its own existence. The breath of God, breathed forth, can never be part of God again. Even the dust, that once contained a living soul, is set apart to harbour it once more. —The soul returns to God,—into the world of spirits,—the world invisible to man, yet visible to God. The soul returns to God,—to God as *Saviour*—or to God as *Judge*; in either case to *God*. But what a *difference*!—Listen, my friend, oh, listen to the truth; it is solemn, and, oh, how sure! Is God distasteful to you? Love you not His thoughts? Feel you His presence to be dreaded? And *well* you *may*, if now you know Him not. But think,—*What* will it be *at last*? Now you can *seem* to hide yourself from God—God hides Himself from you—and so you are satisfied. But when your naked soul flies shivering away, unclothed by flesh, with nought to shield thee from the living God, ah! *who* can tell the anguish felt by spirit, when thus exposed to Deity! Ah! *who* can tell the pain inflicted by God's all-seeing eye upon the spirit, thus laid bare! And *who* can tell the

bliss, the joy, the rapture of the soul,—the happy soul—the sainted soul—the spirit of the just made perfect! It breathes at last its native air—unmixed with sin—unsullied by temptation.—It bathes itself in seas of glory,—the glory of the Saviour's presence. It wings its way into the inmost regions of His love, and sees His face for ever!

"Nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given by one shepherd."—ECCL. XII. 11.

Words spoken by the ministers of truth—words of salvation—messages of grace—brought home with power to the soul! Such are the "*nails*" here spoken of,—lasting impressions; truths fastened in the inner man; God's nature given; the Son of God revealed; repentance, faith, and holiness, imparted; man born again of God.—Christian, remember you the time, when first you knew the Lord? Perhaps you don't—for some receive the truth in tender years, ere thought was well matured; or else the work has been, apparently, so gradual, they cannot fix the epoch of their change. But if you know it, say, can you *ever* forget it? The time—the place—the attendant circumstances—the preacher, or the friend, that spoke to you of Jesus,—*what* can efface them from your memory? *What* pluck them from your heart? *Who* can draw out the "*nails*" thus fastened in your soul? And in the after days of grace—in all the workings of experience—in all the growth of knowledge, and exercise of faith, is it not still

the same? Look at your *Bible*! How many texts start up before you, written in type of gold! Why is it *thus*? Each tells you of a season, when first it sensibly impressed your soul. Each is a "*nail*," well fastened there. Some "*master of assemblies*," fastened it,—some brother warrior—some fellow sinner. One taught you *that*—another taught you *this*. One planted you—another watered—many have helped you on your way; and yet "*one Shepherd*" sent them *all*—one Master Shepherd, even *Jesus*! *His* is the grace, the love, the truth. *He* fixed the "*nails*." His hand has sent them home. He gives the Spirit. The work is *His alone*. What *Jesus* does shall never be undone. He drives the "*nails*," and straightway they are clenched; each fastened by the power of His eternal will. He first renews the soul; implants the substance of His grace,—something to hold the "*nails*," when once they are driven in. God's nature in the soul retains the Word, and will not part with it. Hence all the perseverance" of the saints. God loved them—chose them—called them—begat them by His word—and keeps them fast. Each "*nail*" is firm imbedded in the soul, keeping the whole in place, and makes it sure.

"Of making many books there is no end."—

ECCLES. XII. 12.

AND was it so, e'en in the days of *Solomon*, ere modern art was known, and books were multiplied, as now they are? Oh! what would

Solomon have said, had he but seen *a street* in our metropolis, where works by thousands issue from the press? Could he have seen our libraries—shelf upon shelf, groaning with endless tomes,—each year, each month, well nigh each circling day, bringing its contribution to the former store!—We live in days when “reading” must be had. “The schoolmaster is abroad,” and craves fresh matter for his motley crew. The march of intellect prefers its claims. Science advances with such giant strides, that works of yesterday are obsolete to-day, and soon give place to others.—What is true of science—is doubly true of lighter reading. Book chases book across the field of novelty, in ever-changing form. Woe to the clown, that lags behind, and talks of what was new a year ago!—Religion, too, has taken up her pen, and works her types unceasingly. Essays and sermons—works critical and deep—doctrine, experience, and fiction—the Scripture comment, history, and prophetic views,—all claim their authors by the score, and fill the eye.—In such a day we need discretion,—“wisdom” that is useful “to direct,” how much, and *what* to read. The *Word* is overlaid amid the multitude, and suffers loss, even among Christian men.—Mayhap it ill becomes *the man*, who is *adding* to the store, to make remarks like *these*! Yet he would make his chapters shorter, and his pages few, that they may interfere the less with Bible hours—and strive that what he writes may point you back to Truth, and make you search the Word of God

more closely.—Reader, whate'er you read, I pray you, make the Word your chiefest study. Take it to God Himself. He wrote it. Who can interpret it like *Him*? Be God Himself your commentary. Read it with thought, and prayer. All that you gather thus will stay with you, as nothing else will stay. None teaches like the Lord the *Spirit*. Believe that He can teach you, and He *will*. The more you trust Him for His teaching, the more He will teach you. The more He teaches you, the less you will care for other teaching. The more your senses thus are exercised, the more you are qualified to judge of other books—to separate the precious from the vile, and thus do honour to the Truth.

“*Much study is a weariness of the flesh.*”—

ECCL. XII. 12.

STUDY is weariness to flesh; and yet it is not flesh that studies, but the mind. The body is mostly *still* in times of study—yet flesh is wearied; so closely are the soul, and body joined.—Where study is followed to excess, *self* lies beneath it,—self-love—self-pleasing—self-aggrandizement. Where do you find more selfishness than in the “study”—with its book, and pen, and easy chair?—Even in studying the *Word*, it is wrong to over do it. Self-seeking meets you *here*. Look back and see. Have you ever found the Spirit work, when weariness came on? He acts in unison with providential laws. These plainly tell you it is

wrong to over-tax your powers, and ask of them what they can never yield. When aching head, and smarting eyes warned thee to cease, was it not selfishness that urged thee on? Wiser than God thou hast been,—more zealous still than He. He bade thee stop. Self said, “I *must* go on.” The Spirit said, “I am not with thee.” Self said, “I will go *alone*.”—Excess of study is to spirit, as gluttony to flesh. Who thrives by over-feeding? Who gains by over-study? Who can retain knowledge, acquired thus? The sickened mind disgorges it—it is emptier than before.—We over do it from want of faith. We cannot trust the Spirit, either to help our memory, or supply our lack of reading—and so we play the fool by over-study.—My friend, are you preparing for the ministry? Coupled with *this*, you have before you a field of *literary fame*. Why is your strength expended for this *latter* end? Is it to help you for the cure of souls—in preaching Christ—or visiting the poor? Is it for *these* you work your energies? Ah, search again; you will find that *flesh* is working *here*. What has the *Cross* to do with literary fame, and *what* are “*honours*” to the Cross? Has *Jesus* asked it at thine hand? Such carnal weapons are unknown to Christ. You hear it said that fame for learning will aid His cause, and glorify His grace; that men are predisposed to hear a *scholar*, and cease their prejudices, *when* Christian men have taken high “*degrees*.” Believe it not. *Grace* is the only weapon. What other do you find in Scripture? When

Christ is lifted up, all men are drawn to Him. (John xii. 32.) If learning is lifted up, then *self* is lifted; *Christ* is lifted *not*. Then trust it not, my Friend; it will only hinder *thee*, and draw no souls to *Him*.

*"Fear God and keep His commandments :
for this is the whole duty of man."*—
ECCLES. XII. 13.

AND so it always *was*, and so will it *ever* be. So was it in *Paradise*. It has been so since Adam *fell*. Man's duty shifted not with Adam's innocence. God varied not His law, to suit his rebel, man. The *Gospel* made no difference in *this*. Man's duty must continue still the *same*. This is the reason why he needs a *Saviour*—his duty beats him; he never could do it, and he never will; he needed One to do it *for him*. This is what *Christ* has done. *Believe* in Christ, His doings, then, are *thine*.—"Fear God!" My Friend, know you what *this* contains? Who ever feared Him *perfectly*? Have you, or I? Our fathers—or our kin?—"Fear God!" None but a sinless being can accomplish this. Art thou an *Angel*? Ah, think it not. Your heart can never fear the Lord.—"*Keep his commandments!*" Who ever kept them? One, *only* One. It is neither you, nor I. It was *Christ*, and He alone.—"*Keep His commandments?*" Which have you *kept*? Rather, *which* have you not transgressed? Which day, which hour, have you kept them *all*? Which moment have you fully honoured *one*?—"Keep his commandments?"

Yes, you may, when you are *perfect*. Say, will this ever be? Perfect in *self*? Ah, never! Perfect in *Christ*? Ah, that is another thing.—“*Keep His commandments!*” Believe in Christ, and then you have kept them all. None kept in self; not one unkept in *Christ*. All sin in self; all righteousness in *Christ*. In self, God neither loved, nor feared; God honoured, feared, and loved, in *Christ*.—Oh, wondrous scheme! Man saved! God honoured! The Law observed! Atonement made! Man’s fall undone by *Man*! Man’s penalty discharged by *Man*—the God in man, *Christ Jesus*! Man did it—yet man did it not,—*not fallen* man.—Thus man is justified, and lives again. Not only so, he is also *willing* made; willing to fear the Lord; willing to keep His law—a willingness he did not feel before. The *principle* is there. The Spirit is there; and hence the *change* of principle—the principle of fear, and strict obedience; the principle of faith; the principle of love! If now he fail,—as fail he often does,—it is ‘gainst his will. In *mind* he keeps it all, although the flesh is weak. He looks for righteousness in Christ, even here on *earth*; he looks for perfectness in *heaven*.



